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STUDY & STAGE

A YEAR-BOOK OF CRITICISM

BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

London

GRANT RICHARDS

1899



Preface

WERE it not that Mr. Quiller Couch had already made use, and excellent use, of the title, I should have called this little book *Adventures in Criticism*. For it is one of the alleviations of the journalist-critic's in the main unenviable calling that it is above all things adventurous. He plods no mill-horse round of unvarying toil, but sallies forth day by day into the forest of contemporary literature, blissfully uncertain as to what good or evil chance may await him. Destiny, working for the most part through the instrumentality of Editors and Managers, metes out to him many a tedious and well-nigh degrading task, but does not fail to intersperse a fair proportion of spirit-stirring and delightful happenings. He never knows what adventure may await him round the next turn of the glade. It may be the championing of Beauty in distress, baited by a rabble rout of paynim Philistines. It may be an ambush set for him by some felon knight. It may be (and this is not the least agreeable contingency) a splintering of lances with some courteous comrade-in-arms, in defence of a contested Ideal. And ever and anon, in some richly-dight pavilion on a liliated lawn, aerial harmonies will allure him to a magic banquet, quickening alike to sense and soul.

This book, then, chronicles such of my critical adventures of the past year as seemed to possess more than an absolutely ephemeral interest. The principle of selection it would be hard to define, and somewhat unprofitable to boot, since the most cogent principle of selection could not force the reader to find an article interesting which, in fact, appeared to him trivial or tedious. It may not be out of place, however, to state briefly the main consideration which induced me to believe that such a selection could possibly have any interest at all.

We are apt, I think, to draw too hard-and-fast a line between literature and journalism, and to ignore, if not the existence, at any rate the right to exist, of the debateable land between the two. We assume that there is, or ought to be, no middle course between addressing our remarks exclusively to the passing day, and ridiculously essaying to shout them down the vista of the ages. As soon as a piece of writing appears between two boards (or even in paper, stitched) we apply to it the standard of a colossal abstraction named LITERATURE, and finding it, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, pitifully below that standard, we cry "Out upon it! Why cumbereth it the ground?" But I submit that, as there is in fact, so there ought to be of right, a wide borderland between the absolutely ephemeral and the would-be eternal. After all, there are other measures of time than the day, or even the week. We do not step from Saturday night straight into kingdom-come. It is possible, and surely legitimate, to aspire to a literary life of six months or a year, without making any ludicrous assault upon immortality. We all of us, every year of our lives, read scores of books with pleasure and profit, which we should not care to treasure

upon our shelves, and do not dream of regarding as possessions for ever. I may, of course, be wrong in imagining that this chronicle of a year's adventures in criticism has in it the stuff to give even such transitory pleasure to any human soul. But at least I am guiltless of the arrogance of conceiving that in bringing together these despatches, so to speak, of the campaign of 1898, I am "laying great bases for eternity."

In one respect, the book may claim a certain originality. I am not aware that any one hitherto has dared to treat the English acted drama as literature, and to place literary and dramatic criticisms not only on the same plane, but absolutely in the same rank, shoulder to shoulder. I trust the reader will not find that the variety thus imparted to my subject-matter amounts to a distressing heterogeneity. Perhaps the sagacious reviewer may discern in this division of my interests a source of weakness, and decide that I write about the drama like a literary critic and about literature like a dramatic critic. If he can forgive me for taking the jibe out of his mouth, he may perhaps admit, on reflection, that it is no bad thing for a critic here and there to bring with him to the theatre some of the standards of the study, and to carry back to the study some of that rapidity of perception and penetration which is, or ought to be, engendered by the habit of making snapshot records of the passing pageant of the stage.

Let me own, however, that I have not applied the same principle of selection to theatrical and to literary articles. The reason is plain: it is impossible for any one man to do more than dip at random into the lucky-bag of a year's literature, whereas it needs no superhuman

industry or grasp of mind to present a tolerably complete account of all the noteworthy theatrical events of a season. Such an account will, I believe, be found in the following pages. Indeed, I have perhaps too liberally interpreted the term "noteworthy," and have included articles on certain productions of very slight intrinsic interest, because they seemed symptomatic of the trend of popular (or managerial) taste. Literature, even the literature of a single year, is a wide champaign which no one man can hope to survey in any detail; the drama is a narrow road running through it, of which it is quite possible to note all the characteristic features. "A road running through the champaign!" some people may exclaim with scorn, "Say rather skirting it, and none too closely!" But I think the impartial observer will admit that even the beaten highway of the English drama (to say nothing of bypaths) is taking such a turn as may one day lead it into the very heart of English literature.

For permission to reprint such of the following articles as appeared in the *World*, I have to thank the Trustees under the will of the late Mr. Edmund Yates. Most of the literary articles originally appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*; but one is reprinted from the *Academy*, and part of another from the *Outlook*. To the Editors of all these papers my grateful acknowledgments are due.

W. A.

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MR. BERNARD SHAW'S PLAYS

I

I HAVE never approached a more difficult task than that which now confronts me. How am I to make clear to myself—to say nothing of other people—the tangle of emotions with which I lay down these two volumes of Mr. George Bernard Shaw's plays! He calls them *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, but that is a mere catch-phrase. Almost any other pair of antithetic adjectives would have been more applicable. With one exception, the plays are all unpleasant; and even the exception is dubious. If Mr. Shaw had wanted a really descriptive title for his dramatic works, he should have called them "Plays, Wise and Silly," or "Intelligent and Unintelligent," or "Admirable and Despicable." But no such mechanical antithesis would meet the case. Two out of the seven plays are works of genius for which even Mr. Shaw's modesty could not possibly find an adequate epithet; while one of the remaining five is an outrage upon art and decency, for which even my indignation cannot find a printable term of contumely. To express my sense of the beauty of *Candida* and the baseness of *The Philanderer*, I should have to borrow Mr. Swinburne's vocabulary of praise and scorn—which is (perhaps fortunately) as inalienable as his gift of song. An hour ago I was reading

Candida for the third time, with bursts of uncontrollable laughter, not unmingled with tears. The thing is as true a poem as ever was written in prose, and my whole soul went out in admiration and gratitude to the man who had created it. Then I re-read an act of *The Philanderer*, and I wanted to cut him in the street.

Both feelings, no doubt, were exaggerated, hysterical. Perhaps the second, no less than the first, was a compliment to Mr. Shaw—at any rate I am sure he will take it as such. I record these emotions, not as criticism, but simply to show the dynamic quality of the book. Good or bad, it is certainly not indifferent. Its appearance is an event, literary and theatrical, of the first magnitude. From the theatrical point of view—the point of view, that is to say, of those enthusiasts who long and hope to see a worthy dramatic literature on the English stage—it is not an entirely encouraging event. One has the sense of a great force going more or less to waste from sheer wilfulness. That the man who wrote *Candida* should have written *The Philanderer* and should proceed to write *You Never Can Tell* is a bewildering and saddening phenomenon. It is scarcely less bewildering that he should care to print a piece of crude 'prentice-work like *Widowers' Houses* cheek by jowl with a masterpiece—yes, with all reservations, a masterpiece—like *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. But the main fact is that we have among us, and still in the full vigour of his faculties, the man who wrote *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Candida*. While there is life there is hope; and who knows but that, sometime in the coming century, Mr. Shaw may arrive at years of discretion?

Before coming to particulars, I must find room for one generalisation. In the equipment of any artist there are two readily distinguishable faculties—talent and temperament. By talent I mean perception, memory, power of association, and so forth; by temperament, the medium of personality through which the perceptive power is exercised.

In the great, sane, universal artist, the talent is abnormal, the temperament as nearly as possible normal. We cannot trace in his work the effect of any refraction in the medium through which he looks out upon the world. His imagination may construct new and fantastic worlds of its own; but we always feel that in this case he is deliberately interposing a strong refractory medium between himself and reality, and can withdraw it whenever he pleases. Of this class of artists, what need to name the type? But there is another class of artists, scarcely, if at all, less delightful, a great part of whose genius lies in the powerfully refracting medium through which they habitually look at life. If, by an effort, they withdraw it, they see, and represent, a flat, superficial, uninteresting world. Of this class, there could be no better example than Charles Dickens. Well, the heart of Mr. Shaw's mystery, I take it, is that he belongs to the latter class and is not to be persuaded that he does not belong to the former. He looks at life through an exceedingly abnormal temperament, and has convinced himself that it is the one absolutely normal temperament in the world. With all his acuteness, he cannot see that this is a contradiction in terms. Of himself he relates the parable (vol. i. p. vii.). An oculist, it appears, has assured him that his eyesight is "normal" and that he "sees things accurately"—a faculty "enjoyed by only about ten per cent of the population, the remaining ninety per cent being abnormal." That oculist must have studied under Dr. Relling in Ibsen's *Wild Duck*. Mr. Shaw's sight is "normal," just as Molvik's nature was "dæmonic"—no less and no more. How far Mr. Shaw is from possessing that objectivity of vision which he claims may be judged from the ease with which any reader of the least critical faculty could reconstruct from these plays the character and opinions of their author. For a century and a half the critics of Europe and America have been trying to reconstruct Shakespeare from his five-and-thirty plays, with the very scantiest success. In Ibsen's twenty

plays, who can find the slightest trace of his personality? He has once or twice symbolised his own situation, but in characters utterly and radically unlike himself. On the other hand, whoever wants to know Mr. Bernard Shaw's character and views need only buy these seven plays and take note of the type of character, the tone of mind, that permeates them all, often in flagrant defiance of dramatic consistency and plausibility. In the first play of the seven, *Widowers' Houses*, the Shaw personality is less definitely embodied than in the others. Here he was hampered, in the first place (as his preface narrates), by a foolish plot which I proposed to him; and, in the second place, he was as yet new to his trade and had not attained perfect freedom of self-expression. The moment he went to work entirely unhampered and at his ease, he began not only to express his personal opinions (that he had done freely in *Widowers' Houses*), but actually to project himself upon the scene. Any reader of ordinary intelligence, knowing nothing of Mr. Shaw either personally or in his writings, would be able to draw a very fair portrait of him on the evidence afforded in these volumes. In three out of the seven plays he would find the leading part played by one character under different aliases. Charteris in *The Philanderer*, Bluntschli in *Arms and the Man*, and Valentine in *You Never Can Tell*, are one and the same person. There are superficial differences, I know, but the identity is fundamental. Each is a quick-witted, un-illusioned, fascinating young man, entirely at his ease with himself and the world. Each has kissed the blarney-stone. Each is ready at a moment's notice with a psychological theory of the persons about him, and is prepared to play them as he would the pieces on a chess-board. Each has the imperturbable temper of the practised debater, and the stoicism of the man who cares more for the intellectual than for the emotional side of life. And, finally, each is engaged in the same agreeable task—that of disillusioning and dominating a beautiful but headstrong young lady.

Then the discerning reader would find facets of the same character distributed through the remaining three plays. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* Vivie has the cold-blooded stoicism, Frank the quick wit, the blarney, the imperturbable temper. *Candida* is incomparably the best of all the plays, for the simple reason that there is less of the Charteris-Bluntschli element in it than in any of the others. But there are the germs of this character in Eugene; by the time he is eight-and-twenty he too will be a psychological woman-tamer. As for *The Man of Destiny*, the dullest reader cannot fail to perceive that it is written by Captain Bluntschli, late of the Servian Army, now hotel-proprietor in his native Switzerland. It simply develops at tedious length the psychology of war which Bluntschli expounded briefly and amusingly to Raïna; and the authorship is placed beyond all doubt when we note that the innkeeper is the only plausible character in the piece. But Bluntschli laid down his pen about four pages from the end, and Mr. Shaw stepped in to deliver in person a lecture on the English character, ending with a graceful compliment to Ireland. If the reader wishes to realise at a glance the quaintness of Mr. Shaw's illusion of objectivity, let him compare this lecture, so preposterously placed in the mouth of Napoleon, with the long argumentative stage-directions in which Mr. Shaw seeks to prove that the whole play is as realistic as a kinematogram.

Turning now to the individual plays, I pass rapidly over *Widowers' Houses*, which has already been published. Mr. Shaw professes to have in great measure re-written it, but I cannot find that he has made any essential change. He has certainly done nothing to correct the radical error of complicating and obscuring his theme—the iniquities of slum-landlordism and of rent and interest in general—by making his heroine an intolerable termagant. This is simply drawing a red-herring across the scent; for it cannot be pretended that the daughter of

a wealthy slum-landlord is more likely to be a vixen than any other English girl brought up under the conditions of genteel villadom. The character of Blanche is the first symptom of a prevailing tendency in Mr. Shaw's work. Except in *Candida*—the standing exception—he scarcely ever touches a higher emotional pitch than anger, ill-temper, shrewishness. His ideal of dramatic effect is a quarrel, often a slanging-match. Of great joy, deep sorrow, or even real, passionate indignation, we find scarcely a trace in his work. We certainly cannot say of him, as Wordsworth said of Toussaint L'Ouverture :—

Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

It may be that my intolerance for *The Philanderer* is intensified by the way in which, on every second page, Mr. Shaw takes the name of Ibsen in vain. Certain it is that if these things reached Ibsen's ears at all, he would prefer the wildest and most ignorant abuse of the good old "Anti-Ibsenite" journalism to being forced to figure as the patron saint of the squalid coterie here portrayed. If Mr. Shaw had racked his brains for a method of bringing Ibsen and all his works into ridicule and contempt, he could have hit upon nothing better. But Ibsen will survive even the patronage of "Mr. Leonard Charteris, the famous Ibsenist philosopher," and if every mention of his name were struck out of *The Philanderer*, that "topical comedy" would still be a monument of vulgarity. Its subject is succinctly and elegantly set forth by its hero at the end of the first act :—

"Julia wants to marry me : I want to marry Grace. I came here to-night to sweetheart (!) Grace. Enter Julia. Alarums and excursions. Exit Grace. Enter you and Craven. Subterfuges and excuses. Exeunt Craven and Julia. And here we are. That's the whole story."

That *is* the whole story, except that Mr. Charteris,

after interminable scenes of nauseous marivaudage, palms off Julia, a hysterical shrew, upon a certain Dr. Paramore, who, being a vivisectionist, is of course represented as a congenital idiot. As for the ultimate relations between Grace and the charming Charteris, they may be judged from this passage :—

“GRACE. I'm what my father calls the New Woman. [*He lets her go and stares at her.*] I agree with all your ideas.

“CHARTERIS [*scandalised*] That's a nice thing for a respectable woman to say ! You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

“GRACE. I am quite in earnest about them too, though you are not ; and I will never marry a man I love too much. It would give him a terrible advantage over me : I should be utterly in his power. That's what the New Woman is like. Isn't she right, Mr. Philosopher ?

“CHARTERIS. The struggle between the Philosopher and the Man is fearful, Grace. But the Philosopher says you are right.

“GRACE. I know I am right. And so we must part.

“CHARTERIS. Not at all. You must marry some one else ; and then I'll come and philander with you.”

This occurs at the end of Act II. Here, now, is the end of Act III. :—

“CHARTERIS. By the way, what happened after I left you ?

“GRACE. I gave Julia a lecture on her behavior which she will remember to the last day of her life.

“CHARTERIS [*approvingly*] That was right, darling. [*He slips his arm round her waist.*] Just one kiss—to soothe me.

“GRACE [*complacently offering her cheek*] Foolish boy ! [*He kisses her.*] Now come along. [*They go out together.*]”

When he sees Grace talking to Dr. Paramore, Charteris

soliloquises : "How they all love a doctor ! They can say what they like to him." Then to Julia : "I want to show you something—my young woman carrying off your young man." Julia promptly goes up and snatches away a book at which Grace and Dr. Paramore are looking, believing (at Charteris's suggestion) that it is some medical work. Finding that it is only an ordinary magazine, she flings it on the table and says to Charteris, "You fool !" whereupon he, with ready wit, retorts, "Idiot !" Here, now, is a little passage from the scene between the two women :—

"GRACE. Take his love then ; and much good may it do you ! Run to him and beg him to have mercy on you and take you back.

"JULIA. Oh, what a liar you are ! . . . Do you think I need to go down on my knees to men to make them come to me ? That may be your experience, you creature with no figure ; it is not mine. There are dozens of men who would give their souls for a look from me. I have only to lift my finger.

"GRACE. Lift it then ; and see whether he will come."

"What badinage ! What persiflage !" I am far from denying that there is knowledge and ability in the portraiture of Julia. It is the chuckling enjoyment with which it is executed that makes it revolting. Mr. Pinero has given us two not dissimilar types in Mrs. Tanqueray and Olive Allingham in *The Benefit of the Doubt*, but Mr. Pinero's portraiture, no whit less vivid, affects us as a work of art, while Mr. Shaw's merely afflicts us as a breach of manners. The whole play is steeped in an atmosphere of bloodless erotics that is indescribably distressing. I venture to suggest a second title for it : "The Philanderer ; or, Les Demi-Vierges anglaises ;" and I think I prefer the French variety of the type.

What a stride from *The Philanderer* to *Mrs. Warren's Profession* ! This powerful, painful play is marred by

the before-mentioned Shawishness of Vivie and Frank, and the quite unnecessary hovering around the topic of incest. But the character of Mrs. Warren is superb; the indictment of the economic conditions which beget Mrs. Warrens and their bondwomen is thrilling and crushing; and the technique is throughout admirable, especially in the natural yet intensely dramatic manipulation of the great scenes. There are speeches whose irony takes you by the throat, both in the scene in which Mrs. Warren expounds to her Girton-bred daughter the nature of her "profession," and in that in which Sir George Crofts, Mrs. Warren's partner in the "private hotels" which she manages, amplifies the mother's revelations. The former scene, to be sure, would be far more poignant if Vivie were a human girl instead of Mr. Shaw's patent, imperturbable Girtonian paragon; but in that case it would be too painful for endurance. The scene with Crofts, on the other hand, gets its point from Vivie's thorough intellectual competence. How good this is:—

"CROFTS. My code is a simple one, and, I think, a good one. Honor between man and man; fidelity between man and woman; and no cant about this religion or that religion, but an honest belief that things are making for good on the whole.

"VIVIE [*with biting irony*] 'A power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness,' eh?

"CROFTS [*taking her seriously*] Oh, certainly, not ourselves, of course. *You* understand what I mean."

Here is the end of the scene:—

"VIVIE. When I think of the society that tolerates you, and the laws that protect you—when I think of how helpless nine out of ten girls would be in the hands of you and my mother—the unmentionable woman and her capitalist bully——

"CROFTS [*livid*] Damn you!

"VIVIE. You need not. I feel among the damned already."

Admirable, too, is the final scene—the parting—between Vivie and her mother :—

"MRS. WARREN. No woman ever had luck with a mother's curse on her.

"VIVIE. I wish you wouldn't rant, mother. It only hardens me. Come : I suppose I am the only young woman you ever had in your power that you did good to. Don't spoil it all now.

"MRS. WARREN. Yes, Heaven forgive me, it's true ; and you are the only one that ever turned on me. Oh, the injustice of it, the injustice, the injustice !"

Much as I dislike and shrink from certain passages between Frank and Vivie, I have no hesitation in saying that *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is not only intellectually but dramatically one of the very ablest plays of our time.

II

MR. SHAW's second volume contains those plays which he chooses to designate as "Pleasant." They are *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *You Never Can Tell*. Of *The Man of Destiny* I have incidentally said in my former article all that need be said. Let me now, reserving *Candida* for the last, give some account of *Arms and the Man* and *You Never Can Tell*.

They are both farces (Mr. Shaw calls them "comedies"), the one on the Gilbert, the other on the Pinero, model. I call them farces because their primary aim from first to last is not to depict life, but to provoke laughter. Everything is devised and manipulated to that end. In farce, I take it, truth is incidental, laughter essential ; in comedy, truth

is essential, laughter incidental ; that is the only workable distinction. *Candida* is a pure comedy (Mr. Shaw, forced to distinguish it from the other two pieces, calls it a "mystery") ; *Arms and the Man* and *You Never Can Tell* are fantastic farces.

Mr. Shaw has expounded at some length the differences between *Arms and the Man* and Mr. Gilbert's farces and extravaganzas. He is quite right ; the differences are manifest ; but the fundamental similarity subsists none the less. Take, for example, the following extracts from three consecutive pages of the second act :—

"SERGIUS. Am I forgiven ?

"RAINA [*placing her hands on his shoulders as she looks up at him with admiration and worship*] My hero ! My king !

"SERGIUS. My queen ! [*He kisses her on the forehead.*]

"RAINA. How I have envied you, Sergius ! You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world. . . .

"SERGIUS. Dearest, all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. . . .

"RAINA [*very solemnly*] Sergius, I think we two have found the higher love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought.

"SERGIUS. My lady, and my saint ! [*He clasps her reverently.*]

"RAINA. I trust you. I love you. You will never disappoint me, Sergius. [*Louka is heard singing within the house. They quickly release each other.*] I can't pretend to talk indifferently before her : my heart is too full. [*Louka comes from the house with her tray. She goes to the table and begins to clear it.*] I will get my hat ; and then we can go out until lunch time. Wouldn't you like that ?

"SERGIUS. Be quick. If you are away five minutes, it will seem five hours."

Then, without any transition, the scene proceeds :—

"SERGIUS. Louka, do you know what the higher love is?

"LOUKA [*astonished*] No, sir.

"SERGIUS. Very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time, Louka. One feels the need of some relief after it.

"LOUKA [*innocently*] Perhaps you would like some coffee, sir? [*She stretches her hand across the table for the coffee-pot.*]

"SERGIUS [*taking her hand*] Thank you, Louka.

"LOUKA [*pretending to pull*] Oh, sir, you know I didn't mean that. I'm surprised at you.

"SERGIUS [*coming clear of the table, and drawing her with him*] I am surprised at myself, Louka. What would Sergius, the hero of Slivnitza, say if he saw me now? What would Sergius, the apostle of the higher love, say if he saw me now? What would the half-dozen Sergiuses who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here? [*Letting go her hand, and slipping his arm dexterously round her waist.*] Do you consider my figure handsome, Louka?

"LOUKA. Let me go, sir. I shall be disgraced. . . . Miss Raina is sure to be spying about after you.

"SERGIUS [*stung, letting her go*] Take care, Louka. I may be worthless enough to betray the higher love; but do not you insult it.

"LOUKA [*demurely*] Not for the world, sir, I'm sure. May I go on with my work, please, now?

"SERGIUS [*again putting his arm round her*] You are a provoking little witch, Louka. . . .

"LOUKA [*avoiding him*] No; I don't want your kisses. Gentlefolk are all alike; you making love to me behind Miss Raina's back, and she doing the same behind yours.

"SERGIUS [*dropping his familiarity, and speaking with freezing politeness*] If our conversation is to continue, Louka, you will please remember that a gentleman does not discuss the conduct of the lady he is engaged to with her maid.

"LOUKA. It's so hard to know what a gentleman considers right. I thought from your trying to kiss me that you had given up being so particular.

"SERGIUS [*turning from her and striking his forehead*] Devil! devil!

"LOUKA. Ha! ha! I expect one of the six of you is very like me, sir; though I am only Miss Raina's maid.

"SERGIUS [*speaking to himself*] Which of the six is the real man? That's the question that torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard."

It is this trick of constant self-analysis and self-exposure, common to all the characters save Bluntschli, that is essentially Gilbertian. Mr. Shaw would no doubt have invented it for himself, if there had been no Mr. Gilbert to show him the way. It is not his fault, but it is a stubborn fact, that he was born twenty years after Mr. Gilbert, and that Mr. Gilbert inconsiderately took advantage of that start in life to anticipate the device on which more than half the fun of this farce depends. The servants, by the way (a couple of Bulgarian peasants), are the subtlest psychologists of the whole band, and are equipped with a perfectly definite and articulate philosophy of life, evidently founded on a study of Mr. Shaw's novels, which are presumably popular in Bulgaria. It is a standing marvel to me that a man of Mr. Shaw's intelligence should devote himself (in his preface and stage-directions) to proving that *Arms and the Man* is a correct representation of Bulgarian manners and character, instead of frankly admitting and taking credit for its merits as an extravaganza in which a fantastic Bulgaria is peopled for the nonce with Anglo-Irish masqueraders. As an extravaganza it is brilliant and delightful (I draw a distinction, be it noted, between "delightful" and "pleasant"); as a realistic play, it is childish.

Raina Petkoff, and the servant Louka, are the last of Mr. Shaw's intolerable women. Henceforward he deigns to admit that there are other qualities in feminine human nature besides mendacity, vulgarity, and shrewishness. It

is exceedingly difficult for a man to see a woman objectively, because a woman, even in the most superficial and conventional relations, is very largely what a man makes her. The converse, of course, holds good to some, but not to the same, extent. Mr. Shaw has gone through life seeing Shaw women, because women who were probably quite different both before and after, became Shaw women the moment they entered his sphere of magnetism, his "aura." The relation between a man and a woman—even, I repeat, a quite superficial relation—is not the sum of their separate qualities, but a totally different product, sometimes much better, sometimes much worse, than the separate qualities would lead one to expect. It was Mr. Shaw's misfortune (so I conjecture from the female characterisation of his earlier plays) at one stage of his development to bring out the worser elements in the nature of the women he came in contact with. That phase seems to have passed, and it has become possible for him to see and to draw not only *Candida*, but Mrs. Clandon and Gloria in *You Never Can Tell*. Gloria, it is true, is handicapped by the construction of the farce. At half-past nine P.M. she promises to marry a man of whose existence she was ignorant at noon. If it were worth while, one could count every word she exchanges with Valentine from the moment of their introduction until the curtain falls on their betrothal. This, by the way, is Raina's case as well. Mr. Shaw's extravaganza heroines have not even the moderate coyness of Mr. Gilbert's; for does not Patience sing to Archibald :—

Gentle sir, although to marry I design
 (Hey, but he's hopeful, willow willow waly),
 As yet I do not know you, and so I must decline
 (Hey, willow, waly, oh !).

The compression of time, however, is purely conventional, and may be overlooked. Gloria is actually a more or less amiable girl, or—if Mr. Shaw will forgive the term—a lady. I wish she figured in a better play; for, without

preternatural acting, I fear this formless and empty farce would seem very tedious on the stage. Here it is not Mr. Gilbert's manner, but the subtler style of Mr. Pinero that Mr. Shaw adopts, and the result is a much less entertaining play. The Heavenly Twins of Madame Sarah Grand are prominent in the composition. There are differences, of course; Dolly and Philip are not Angelica and Diavolo in every detail; but the resemblance is much more essential than the differences. An old waiter who wanders through the play is an amusing figure. He is an ideal waiter in every detail: I wonder how Mr. Shaw could reconcile it with his anti-idealist principles to draw him. The last act of the farce—the amazing family council—is an extravagance wholly unworthy of Mr. Shaw. He must have been below par when he conceived it. Of many clever touches in the play, the following is perhaps the cleverest. Mrs. Clandon has come back, after eighteen years in Madeira, unshaken in her Philosophical Radicalism, and expecting to find herself still regarded as the pioneer she was when she went away. Her old friend M'Comas seeks to disillusion her:—

“M'COMAS. . . . I'm indulged as an old fogey. I'm out of everything, because I've refused to bow the knee to Socialism.

“MRS. CLANDON [*shocked*] Socialism!

“M'COMAS. Yes: Socialism. That's what Miss Gloria will be up to her ears in before the end of the month if you let her loose here.

“MRS. CLANDON [*emphatically*] But I can prove to her that Socialism is a fallacy.

“M'COMAS [*touchingly*] It is by proving that, Mrs. Clandon, that I have lost all my young disciples. Be careful what you do: let her go her own way. [*With some bitterness*] We're old-fashioned: the world thinks it has left us behind. There is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced.

"MRS. CLANDON [*scornfully unconvinced*] The Church, perhaps ?

"M'COMAS. No ; the theatre."

At last I arrive at the point I have been longing for. Just as the reader doubtless wondered at my indignation over *The Philanderer*, so he will probably wonder at my enthusiasm for *Candida*. It was impossible by mere narrative and quotation to convey any idea of the diffusive ugliness of the one play ; it is equally impossible, by the means at my disposal, to convey any idea of the ingenuity and beauty, the humour and tenderness, of the other. The scene is an East-end parsonage ; the time an October day in 1894. The Reverend James Morell, a Christian Socialist clergyman, an honest man, a fine preacher, and a good fellow, is awaiting the return from the seaside of his wife Candida. Her father, Mr. Burgess, a low and stupid type of the small capitalist and contractor, calls upon him, and they have an amusing scene in which Morell's bluff manliness of character comes out sympathetically. Then Candida arrives, a beautiful woman of thirty-three, "now quite at her best, with the double charm of youth and motherhood." With her comes Eugene Marchbanks, a boy of eighteen, a poet, a nephew of "a real live earl" —in brief, a sort of latter-day Shelley, more fragile in physique and more unpractical. Burgess is vastly impressed by his introduction to this slip of aristocracy ; but at last takes himself off.

"CANDIDA. Do you know, you are a very nice boy, Eugene, with all your queerness ? If you had laughed at my father I shouldn't have minded ; but I like you ever so much better for being nice to him.

"MARCHBANKS. Ought I to have laughed ? I noticed that he said something funny ; but I am so ill at ease with strangers, and I never can see a joke. I'm very sorry.

"CANDIDA. . . . You are worse than usual this morning.

Why were you so melancholy as we came along in the cab?

"MARCHBANKS. Oh, that was nothing. I was wondering how much I ought to give the cabman. I know it's utterly silly; but you don't know how dreadful such things are to me—how I shrink from having to deal with strange people. But it's all right. He beamed all over and touched his hat when Morell gave him two shillings. I was on the point of offering him ten."

When Morell and Marchbanks are left alone, the parson asks the poet to stop to lunch. After fencing with the invitation for some time, Marchbanks says:—

"Thank you, I should like to very much. But I really mustn't. The truth is, Mrs. Morell told me not to. She said she didn't think you'd ask me to stay to lunch, but that I was to remember, if you did, that you didn't really want me to. [*Plaintively*] She said I'd understand; but I don't. Please, don't tell her I told you."

This speech elicits from Morell a display of conjugal self-complacency that goads Marchbanks out of all patience. "There is something," he says, "that must be settled between us. . . . You think yourself stronger than I am; but I shall stagger you if you have a heart in your breast."

"MORELL. Stagger me, my boy. Out with it.

"MARCHBANKS. First——

"MORELL. First?

"MARCHBANKS. I love your wife."

After a moment of amazement Morell bursts into a roar of laughter. "Why, my dear child, of course you do," he says, "everybody does." Then follows a scene of really exquisite gradations, worthy of a consummate dramatic artist, in which Marchbanks bit by bit breaks down

Morell's placid self-confidence, and makes him wonder whether it be true that Candida "has not one thought—one sense—in common with him," and that this impish boy understands her better than he himself does. At last he makes a moving appeal to Marchbanks, in his best oratorical style. "There are many things to make us doubt," so he winds up, "if once we let our understanding be troubled. Even at home, we sit as if in a camp, encompassed by a hostile army of doubts. Will you play the traitor and let them in on me?" This is Eugene's retort:—

"MARCHBANKS [*looking round him*] Is it like this for her here always? A woman, with a great soul, craving for reality, truth, freedom; and being fed on metaphors, sermons, stale perorations, mere rhetoric. Do you think a woman's soul can live on your talent for preaching?

"MORELL [*stung*] Marchbanks, you make it hard for me to control myself. My talent is like yours in so far as it has any real worth at all. It is the gift of finding words for divine truth.

"MARCHBANKS [*impetuously*] It's the gift of the gab, nothing more and nothing less. What has your knack of fine talking to do with the truth, any more than playing the organ has? I've never been in your church; but I've been to your political meetings; and I've seen you do what's called rousing the meeting to enthusiasm: that is, you excited them until they behaved exactly as if they were drunk. And their wives looked on and saw what fools they were. Oh, it's an old story: you'll find it in the Bible. I imagine King David, in his fits of enthusiasm, was very like you. [*Stabbing him with the words*] 'But his wife despised him in her heart.'"

On this Morell loses his temper, shakes the boy, and bids him leave the house. "I'm not afraid of you!" cries Eugene, cowering before him in his physical fragility. "It's you who are afraid of me. . . . You are driving me

out of your house because you daren't let her choose between your ideas and mine. You are afraid to let me see her again." He vows that unless Morell lets him stay to lunch he will relate the whole scene to Candida, and "she will understand me, and know that I understand her." Half in shame, half in fear, Morell consents to let him stay, and for the moment he is master of the situation.

In the second act, the same afternoon, Candida innocently increases her husband's discomfort by a playful criticism of his clerical methods, quite in the manner of Marchbanks :—

"CANDIDA. Oh, you *are* a clergyman, James—a thorough clergyman.

"MORELL [*turning away from her, heart-stricken*] So Eugene says.

"CANDIDA. Eugene's always right. He's a wonderful boy. I have grown fonder and fonder of him all the time I was away. Do you know, James, that though he has not the least suspicion of it himself, he is ready to fall madly in love with me ?

"MORELL [*grimly*] Oh, he has no suspicion of it himself, hasn't he ?

"CANDIDA. Not a bit."

What an admirable situation ! How simple, yet how ingenious ! And Mr. Shaw develops it with the finest tact. Above all things, he has succeeded in that most difficult of tasks, putting a poet on the stage and making him really and convincingly a poet. Eugene has been inexpressibly shocked to find that Candida fills the lamps, and to hear her complain that during her absence "her own particular pet scrubbing brush has been used for blackleading." He gives a wail, as of pain :—

"CANDIDA. What is it, Eugene ?—the scrubbing brush ? [*He shudders.*] Well, there ! never mind. [*She sits down beside him.*] Wouldn't you like to present me with a nice new one, with an ivory back inlaid with mother-of-pearl ?

“MARCHBANKS [*softly and musically, but sadly and longingly*] No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat—a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot! to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and don’t need to be filled with paraffin oil every day.

“MORELL [*harshly*] And where there is nothing to do but to be idle, selfish, and useless.

“CANDIDA [*jarred*] Oh, James, how could you spoil it all?

“MARCHBANKS [*firing up*] Yes, to be idle, selfish, and useless: that is, to be beautiful and free and happy; hasn’t every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? That’s my ideal; what’s yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live in these hideous rows of houses? Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub.

“CANDIDA [*quaintly*] He cleans the boots, Eugene. You will have to clean them to-morrow for saying that about him.

“MARCHBANKS. Oh, don’t talk about boots! Your feet should be beautiful on the mountains.

“CANDIDA. My feet would not be beautiful on the Hackney Road without boots.

“BURGESS [*scandalised*] Come, Candy: don’t be vulgar. Mr. Marchbanks ain’t accustomed to it.”

I cannot follow in detail the admirably-ordered process of the scenes. The last act (it takes place the same evening) is the best of the three, developing at once the imaginative subtlety of Eugene’s character, and the radiant beauty and sanity of Candida’s. Here is a passage from the culminating scene:—

“MORELL. That foolish boy can speak with the inspiration of a child and the cunning of a serpent. He has claimed that you belong to him and not to me; and,

rightly or wrongly, I have come to fear that it may be true. I will not go about tortured with doubts and suspicions. I will not live with you and keep a secret from you. I will not suffer the intolerable degradation of jealousy. We have agreed—he and I—that you shall choose between us now. I await your decision.

“CANDIDA [*slowly recoiling a step, her heart hardened by his rhetoric in spite of the sincere feeling behind it*] Oh! I am to choose, am I? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.

“MORELL [*firmly*] Quite. You must choose definitely.

“MARCHBANKS [*anxiously*] Morell, you don't understand. She means that she belongs to herself.

“CANDIDA [*turning on him*] I mean that, and a good deal more, Master Eugene, as you will both find out presently. And pray, my lords and masters, what have you to offer for my choice? I am up for auction, it seems. What do you bid, James.

“MORELL [*reproachfully*] Cand—— [*He breaks down: his eyes and throat fill with tears: the orator becomes the wounded animal.*] I can't speak——

“CANDIDA [*impulsively going to him*] Ah, dearest——

“MARCHBANKS [*in wild alarm*] Stop: it's not fair. You mustn't show her that you suffer, Morell. I am on the rack too; but I am not crying.

“MORELL [*rallying all his forces*] Yes, you are right. It is not for pity that I am bidding. [*He disengages himself from Candida.*]

“CANDIDA [*retreating, chilled*] I beg your pardon, James; I did not mean to touch you. I am waiting to hear your bid.

“MORELL [*with proud humility*] I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty of purpose for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman.

“CANDIDA [*quite quietly*] And you, Eugene? What do you offer?

"MARCHBANKS. My weakness! my desolation! my heart's need!

"CANDIDA [*impressed*] That's a good bid, Eugene. Now I know how to make my choice.

"MORELL [*in a suffocated voice—the appeal bursting from the depths of his anguish*] Candida!

"MARCHBANKS [*aside, in a flash of contempt*] Coward!

"CANDIDA [*significantly*] I give myself to the weaker of the two.

[*Eugene divines her meaning at once: his face whitens like steel in a furnace.*]

"MORELL [*bowing his head with the calm of collapse*] I accept your sentence, Candida.

"CANDIDA. Do you understand, Eugene?

"MARCHBANKS. Oh, I feel I'm lost. He cannot bear the burden.

"MORELL [*incredulously, raising his head with prosaic abruptness*] Do you mean me, Candida?"

She *does* mean her stupid, honest, good fellow of a husband, and in a speech of angelic humour and tenderness she says so. In this scene Mr. Shaw has more than made amends for all his Blanches and Julias, Vivies and Rainas; and in this play he has shown that he might, if he would, be a pillar of fire to our dramatic movement, instead of an irresponsible jack o' lantern. It is only the will that is lacking; but the will, alas! is the man. There are six Shaws (at a moderate estimate) just as there are six Sergius Saranoffs; if only he would cast out four or five of them—and the Charteris-Shaw first of all—thus leaving room for the development of the poet-humorist-technician Shaw who wrote *Candida*, he might have the future of the English theatre in his hands. When I say and reiterate that *Candida* is a work of rare genius, it is in the desperate hope of begetting in its author a little—humility. That would be the saving of him.

CARLYLE AND BURNS

MR. JOHN MUIR, author of *Carlyle on Burns*, has diligently searched the Carlylean scriptures for everything bearing on Burns, and has reprinted his gleanings with a running commentary. He has done his work sensibly and unpretentiously, animated, it is clear, by a genuine love for his subject. Grammar is scarcely his strong point, as appears from such a sentence as the following :—"Equally frequent has Carlyle referred to an incident in the life of Burns, during the poet's first visit to Edinburgh." Moreover, he is a careless proof-reader, and has passed many errors of the press. The German versions, which he quotes, of "John Barleycorn" and "Duncan Gray" are strewn with misprints, thick as leaves in Vallombrosa. Nevertheless, the book is a pleasant one, and not without its uses.

Whether it can be regarded as a service to Carlyle is a totally different question. Burns was a favourite theme for declamation with the "greatest writer of the nineteenth century," as Mr. Muir calls him; and when we find all these declamations brought together (except the *Edinburgh Review* essay, which is omitted as being accessible to every one), their monotony and their semi-sincerity become painfully apparent. Carlyle never outgrew his early local and racial affection for the man Burns; he may even be said to have loved him more and more in process of time, as a convenient missile to fling at the eighteenth

century. But of real appreciation of the poet he was in the main incapable. His instinctive dislike and contempt for poetry is for ever getting the upper hand, and setting him to patronise and apologise for the mere poet in Burns, while he tries to pass him off as something else—a Hero, a “New Norse Thor,” a “born king of men,” a potential “Politician, Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher.”

“Is it strange (he asks) that his poems are imperfect, and of small extent, or that his genius attained no mastery in its art? . . . To try by the strict rules of Art such imperfect fragments, would be at once impossible and unfair. . . . We can look on but few of these pieces as, in strict critical language, deserving the name of poems : they are rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense ; yet seldom essentially melodious, aerial, poetical.”

Be it noted that Carlyle is not here anticipating Mr. Henley’s complaint of the lack in Burns of sheer verbal beauty—of style in the Miltonic sense of the word. How little he cared for this is proved by his reference, in the same essay, to “such poetry as that of Keats, where the whole consists in a weak-eyed maudlin sensibility, and a certain vague random tunefulness of nature.” He was simply trying to reconcile a prejudice in favour of Burns, the Scotch peasant of genius, with a prejudice against poetry, which he masked (to himself as well as others, no doubt) under the affectation of an impossibly exigent standard. We see how much of sheer clannishness there was in Carlyle’s whole attitude, when we compare his more than lenient estimate of Burns’s character with the habitual and harsh intolerance of his judgments in other cases. Writing to the poet’s sister in 1842, he speaks of the “noble life” of her “illustrious brother”—this rhadamanthine moralist who dismisses Heine simply as a “blackguard,” and sees nothing worth noting in Lamb but (I quote from memory) his “invincible proclivity to gin.”

Having, then, started in life with a hard-and-fast conception of Burns as a Lowland-Scotch Peasant-Hero to whom all things must be forgiven, Carlyle found, as time went on, that his poetry must be forgiven him as well. He never studied it in its historic relations; he stated the reverse of the demonstrable truth (which Goethe had already divined) in speaking of Burns as a poet "without help, without instruction, without model, or with models only of the meanest sort"; he never tried, in fact, to ascertain what Burns really wrote and did not write, invented and did not invent. His famous Essay of 1828 contains some just appreciation with a good deal of sentimental misappreciation; but by the time he had reached the plenitude of his prophetic inspiration, he had got past caring for Burns as the Poet he was, and preferred to think of him as the Hero he was not. Hence it must be set down as an axiom that "every truly great man could be *all* sorts of men," that "the poet who could merely sit on a chair and compose stanzas would never make a stanza worth much," and that consequently it was an eternal disgrace to George III., "the meagre Pitt," and the phantasmal Eighteenth Century, that Burns was not raised to the peerage, and appointed Lord High Admiral, Generalissimo of the Forces, or at the very least Archbishop of Canterbury. These poor poems of his must be praised, no doubt, but at the same time explained away as mere nothings compared with what the Peasant-Thor could have achieved if the "red-tape Phantasms" of the eighteenth century had not perversely given him an easy and not ill-paid place in the Excise, and said: "Go on writing poetry." "George the Third," cries the Sage, "is head charioteer of the Destinies of England, and Robert Burns is gauger of ale in Dumfries. It is an Iliad in a nutshell." It is a truism in a nutshell; but why drag in Homer?

Scotland will never truly appreciate her Burns until she clears her mind of this Carlylean cant. Burns needs no

patronage, no apology, no commiseration. It was a pity for himself and his family that he could not govern his life better ; but the world has no cause to lament that he was what he was. It is a pity that he died in early middle age ; but if we think of him aright, we feel none of that torturing sense of unfulfilment which afflicts us when we think of Shelley or Keats. It is a gross injustice to him to talk of his "imperfect fragments" and declare that "his genius attained no mastery in its art." In his own art, in the art of Scottish vernacular poetry, he did attain consummate mastery ; and there is not the slightest evidence to show that he could have excelled in any other art. Mr. Lang regrets that he did not write his projected tragedy on the subject of Robert the Bruce ; for my part, I am much more inclined to rejoice. Such speculations, however, are idle at best. It is what Burns was that concerns us, not what he conceivably might have been ; and this, in brief, is what he was—the right man in the right place. He consummated and glorified a fine poetical tradition, which, but for him, would probably have dribbled away without leaving any mark in the literature of the world. He was the last and greatest of a long line of "makars." He came just at the propitious moment. Fifty years earlier he would have lacked the incentive which he found in the political and spiritual ferment of the late eighteenth century. Fifty years later he would no longer have found his native dialect in its full vigour and purity. It would already have been declining towards what it has now become—an accent rather than a dialect. Even the influence of Burns himself, powerfully seconded by Scott, has not been sufficient to make head against the counter-influences of the schoolmaster, the newspaper, and the railroad. Burns was, then, to vary the phrase, the right man at the right time. From the literary point of view, he was in no sense the victim, but rather the chosen favourite, of Fortune. He did a great work, and he did it superbly. He interpreted to

the world the as yet but semi-vocal Scottish peasant, and in doing so he conquered for himself and his country a conspicuous place in European literature. What is there to deplore in all this? And why should we cry out upon Pitt and the eighteenth century because a convivial and amatory poet dreed his weird, and remained a convivial and amatory poet to the end? If we must needs bemoan the destiny of Robert Burns, let us at least tell the truth about it. He fell a victim, not to Pitt and the eighteenth century, but to that bitter Scotch Puritanism which made the life of his class so drearily unbeautiful, save for such momentary glamour as might be thrown around it by whiskey and "the lasses." Burns was the poet and martyr (if you choose to put it so) of the reaction against Puritanism. But it would never have done for the son of Carlyle's father to make any such admission.

MR. GISSING ON DICKENS

A WHOLE volume of the "Victorian Era Series" is devoted to Charles Dickens; very rightly, for he was beyond all question one of the great forces of the period. And Mr. Gissing proves himself the very man to grapple with this complex and disconcerting subject. Disconcerting, I say, because of all writers that ever lived Dickens sets formal criticism, the criticism of rule and plummet, most audaciously at defiance. He is like Sam Weller in the witness-box—there is no cornering him. He flouts our sober judgment at every turn, and makes us ashamed of the merest artistic common sense, as of an impertinent pedantry. Of such a writer—so astonishing a genius, so unequal and in some ways misguided an artist—it is very hard to treat without falling into excess, whether of praise or blame. Mr. Gissing avoids both dangers, and without swerving from his allegiance to an artistic ideal more serious and strenuous than Dickens ever conceived, shows that the keenest sense of a great man's limitations is not inconsistent with the most ardent appreciation of his unique and beneficent genius.

The critic sets about his task with a plodding conscientiousness which at first augurs rather ill for his success. Though it be not essential that "who drives fat oxen should himself be fat," we somehow expect that who writes of a great humorist should himself show humour. But presently we recognise that this is a foolish demand.

Mr. Gissing keeps his own humour in abeyance throughout, yet leaves us in no doubt of his alert comprehension and enjoyment of the humour of his subject. His ultra-conscientiousness results in nothing worse than a slightly awkward division of his subject, under headings which imply a good deal of cross classification. He gives separate chapters to "The Story-Teller," to "Art, Veracity, and Moral Purpose," to "Characterisation," "Satiric Portraiture," "Women and Children," "Humour and Pathos," and "Style." Now it may almost be said that each of these topics—except, perhaps the first and last—inseparably involves all the rest, and Mr. Gissing complicates his task by attempting to adhere consistently to so artificial an analysis. A chronological exposition of the development of Dickens's mind and art from book to book would surely have been simpler and not less interesting. What one chiefly misses in Mr. Gissing's criticism, indeed, is sustained psychological study. It is perhaps in order to bring his book more within the scope of the Victorian Era Series that he approaches his theme from the sociological rather than the psychological point of view. He considers Dickens rather as an element in our social history than as a phenomenon in the spiritual history of the world. This merely means that he has not exhausted his subject, which was not, after all, what he set forth to do.

Though Mr. Gissing's tone is measured and unemotional, I have read his book with real emotion. As he passed in leisurely review the figures of this "human comedy," I could not but feel a novel realisation of all that England owes to the humanest of her master spirits. Mr. Robert Buchanan long ago found the just word for Dickens, when he called him the Good Genie of modern fiction. Mr. Gissing does not explicitly take this point of view, but surely it is the right one. A poet in the truest sense of the word, a man of incomparable vision and imagination, Dickens transmuted the ugliness of mid-century London into a fantastic fairyland, closely modelled

on reality, yet quaintly differentiated—at once a searching commentary upon everyday life and a delightful refuge from it. This fairyland is still with us, and shows no sign of vanishing away. Those who despise Dickens little know how deeply they are in his debt. They do not realise how much duller this world would be if the Good Genie had not, at a thousand points, touched it with his wand. And it would be an appreciably worse world as well. Mr. Gissing shows clearly that not only by preaching the gospel of human kindness in general, but in virtue of conscious efforts towards definite ends, Dickens was a true benefactor to his country. Surely, then, it is an ungrateful impertinence to complain that a Good Genie does not always obey the rules of art with which lesser men strive to supply the place of inspiration and magic. And the rules by which Dickens is condemned are generally the rules of a quite different art from his, identified with it by sheer confusion of thought. In his own art—the art of illumination by differentiation (or idealisation as Mr. Gissing prefers to call it)—he was a master, not only great, but supreme. Make all possible deductions for his failures and mistakes—admit that he had not the knack of plausible construction, that his heroes, heroines, and villains were apt to be lay figures, that he seldom made a character live without the aid of some touch of oddity, that at best his creations have scarcely any intellectual, spiritual, or passional life—admit all this, and what a glorious residue remains! He has peopled our imagination with a whole world of delightful creatures, more real than reality; he has unsealed our vision, he has stimulated our sympathies, in a hundred directions; and he has given unalloyed, unaffected, and harmless pleasure to incalculable multitudes of people all the world over. An English guest at a Viennese “æsthetic tea,” the other day, was surprised to find the company unanimous in singing the praises of a great English *Dichter*, whom they named “Boats.” Even when he had divined this to

be the Teutonic rendering of "Boz," his surprise was scarcely diminished. But the Austrians were right—there is no greater name than that of "Boats" in the literary record of the Victorian era.

Mr. Gissing justly traces many of Dickens's limitations to the very source of his greatness—the fact that he was a typical incarnation of middle-class English character. He did not "write down" to his audience—he felt with them in every particular, and had no effective impulse to write otherwise. He had no relish for the novel of passion, which he probably found it hard to distinguish from the novel of sheer lubricity. Therefore, as Mr. Gissing subtly suggests, such an episode as that of Little Em'ly, like the central incident in *Adam Bede*, comes upon one, at the first reading, as a moral shock :—

"So determined are these novelists not to offend our precious delicacy that in the upshot they offend it beyond endurance, springing upon us, so to speak, the results of uncontrollable passion, without ever allowing us to suspect that such a motive was in play. . . . The Emperor Augustus, we are told, objected to the presence of women at the public games when athletes appeared unclad ; but he saw nothing improper in their watching the death-combats of gladiators. May we not find a parallel to this in the English censorship ? To exhibit the actual course of things in a story of lawless (nay, or of lawful) love is utterly forbidden ; on the other hand, a novelist may indulge in ghastly bloodshed to any extent of which his stomach is capable. Dickens, the great writer, even appears on a public platform and recites with terrible power the murder of a prostitute by a burglar, yet no voice is raised in protest. Gore is perfectly decent ; but the secrets of an impassioned heart are too shameful to come before us even in a whisper."

Without defending "the English censorship" in all its workings, one cannot but point out that the convention

which accepts of gore while it discountenances passion is not quite the counter-sense which Mr. Gissing would make of it. Homicide, though it may be grossly and brutally overdone, is a much less inflammatory topic than the instinct which "makes the world go round." If Mr. Gissing will for a moment imagine one of our blood-boltered African romancers left free to welter in "passion," as he now wallows in carnage, he cannot fail to perceive that the line which society instinctively draws is not wholly irrational or arbitrary. None the less just is his suggestion that the over-delicacy of so much English fiction is apt to produce effects, now and then, which are no more edifying than artistic.

Surely the facts do not bear out Mr. Gissing's statement that "with female readers Dickens never was a prime favourite." In my own circle of acquaintance he has been and is a prime favourite with many women, and I have no reason to think them exceptional. It is true that Dickens's gallery of "foolish, ridiculous, and offensive women" is long and masterly; but just because it is masterly, and because it is redeemed by the irresistible grace of humour, women of sense do not resent this unflattering portraiture. It would be an irreconcilable "feminist" indeed who should make haste to put on the cap, or champion the cause, of Mrs. Nickleby or Flora Finching, Miss Pecksniff or Mrs. Gargery.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

M. AUGUSTIN FILON, after introducing the English drama to French readers, has completed his work of international interpretation by sketching for English readers the recent history of the French stage. His book, *The Modern French Drama* (translated by Miss Janet E. Hogarth, and published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall), is a singularly able piece of work. In a light, gossiping style, and without the slightest pedantry of form, he traces the dramatic movement in France from Scribe to M. Rostand. First he defines the method of Scribe—

“The older critics had distinguished three kinds of comedy—the comedy of character, the comedy of manners, and the comedy of intrigue. . . . Scribe had amalgamated these three forms of comedy with the bourgeois drama invented by Diderot, and made an actual reality by Sedaine. The first act was to be given up to explanation, with a final scene in which the action opened ; then after oscillating between good and evil fortune, like a game of chess in which the chances are evenly balanced, the fourth act—as a rule the *Acte du Bal*—crowded the stage with supers and culminated in some scandal, a duel, or a similar event in prospect. The fifth act put everything straight, . . . and the final note was a note of tender, playful serenity, a feeling of having had a lucky escape—something like the famous verdict : ‘Not guilty, but don’t do it again.’”

It would be impossible to define more aptly the good old well-made, happy-ending play. Then came Dumas and Augier, who accepted in essentials, but considerably enlarged, the formula of Scribe and his school. "Scribe gave us studies of character and pictures of manners for the sake of writing plays ; Augier and Dumas wrote plays for the sake of studying characters and painting manners." The war of 1870 seemed for some time to have produced little or no effect upon the drama beyond introducing a note of prophetic frenzy into the moral invectives of Dumas. But the triumph of Naturalism in fiction was followed by a strenuous effort to apply the principles of Flaubert and the De Goncourts to dramatic writing ; and the energy—or shall we say the genius ?—of M. Antoine brought the Théâtre Libre into existence. Augier being dead, Dumas old and dispirited, Meilhac given over to frothy vaudeville, and Sardou—well, Sardou a negligible quantity so far as literature was concerned—the whole intellectual life of the French stage centred for some time round the Théâtre Libre and the other *théâtres à côté*. The special form of play produced by the effort to put Naturalism on the stage was the *comédie rosse*, thus admirably defined by M. Filon—

"*Rosserie* is a vicious sort of ingenuousness ; it represents the state of mind of people who have never had any moral sense, and who are as much at home amid impiety and injustice as a fish is in the sea. It is a sort of child-like and heavenly repose in an atmosphere of corruption, which suggests a travesty of the Golden Age—a world in which all our principles of morality are reversed, and where, in the words of Milton's Satan, evil has become good. This reign of evil is inaugurated without any noisy revolution, without any apparent change in family or social relations, or in ordinary conversation ; it is brought about by a gradual diversion of modern [moral ?] ideas from their original source, till they end by

justifying all the crimes against which they were at first directed."

There was a good deal of *rosserie* in our Restoration comedy ; but in France it was based on a self-conscious and systematic pessimism that savoured rather of Swift than of Congreve. Plays inspired by this view of life (a half-truth at best, and not the pleasanter half of the truth) could not possibly content for long even the intellectual section of the public, and Naturalism as interpreted by Jullien, Ancey, Hennique, De Gramont, Alexis, and others, took no real hold upon the stage. But before the Théâtre Libre came to an end, it had done its work in breaking up and discrediting the well-made play. The monumentally constructed social dramas of Dumas and Augier have been succeeded by what M. Filon calls the New Comedy. Its pedigree might be thus stated in sporting language : by Théâtre Libre out of *Vie Parisienne*. Its chief practitioners are MM. Lemaître, Brieux, Lavedan, Hervieu, and Donnay ; and here is M. Filon's account of its leading characteristics—

"Intrigue is simplified and reduced to a minimum. Instead of 'placing' the characters upon the stage, the first act is employed in explaining the *milieu*, the setting of the action. If this description is unnecessary because the *milieu* is well known to everybody beforehand, the first act sets the action in motion. But the action is nothing except character-painting, . . . so that, as M. Faguet has remarked, we get back to the art of Molière and his immediate successors, that is to say, to living portraits. And when several of these types are grouped before us, we have no longer a portrait but a picture. . . . The spectator, who used to give all his attention to the complexity of the intrigue, now gives it to the psychological complications. His reason is called into play instead of his memory. There must still be preparation where preparation is

needed, and explanation where explanation is called for, but for the most part the writer confines himself to suggestion. . . . Wit is not excluded, but it is no longer *de rigueur*. . . . As for the *dénouement*, it must do the best it can. So much the better if it can prove something, so much the worse if it proves nothing."

M. Filon admits that "it is only masterpieces that fix a style," and that in this style no masterpieces have yet been produced. But clearly the very essence of this style is that it should not be "fixed." Its whole merit lies in its elasticity, and the masterpiece which "fixes" it will destroy it. Not only does it boast no masterpieces—it cannot lay claim to any very enduring successes. The heart of the great public, one must freely admit, is still with the "well-made" vaudeville and melodrama—or with the sentimental drama in verse. M. Filon rejoices without the slightest misgiving in the revival of verse on the stage. He is full of praise for *Le Chemineau* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and he winds up his survey as follows :—

"It was in the autumn of 1895 that Dumas *filis* was taken from us. What a host of emotions and discoveries have come to light since that date ! On the one hand, a long and brilliant series of experiments in the domain of comedy. . . . On the other hand, the unexpected revival of the drama brought about by our great poets, until it is more popular in all its forms than it ever was before. Verily, there is something here more than consolation, and more than promise. One thing is dying, another is born, and there is nothing to prove that the dawning life may not equal, or even excel, that which is drawing to a close."

Would it be possible to end in a similar strain a survey of the recent history of the English stage ? Scarcely, I fear. In point of mere fertility, for one thing, the French

are still vastly ahead of us. They have five or six men who can do tolerable dramatic work, of one sort or another, for every one of ours ; and their good men are not tempted to waste their time and talent on adaptations from the English. Whatever be the reason, the gift of mapping out a story to suit the stage, and telling it in passable dialogue, is far more common there than here ; and the greater the amount of talent, the greater the probability of genius. For the present, so far as I can judge, only one man of indubitable genius, M. Edmond Rostand, is writing for the French stage ; but every season brings one or two new writers to the front, and the genius of comedy may at any moment take his place beside the genius of poetic drama. Indubitably, too, there is a larger intellectual public in Paris than in London, while for one reason or another (even outside the subventioned theatres) managers are content with shorter runs than are required to make a play reasonably remunerative on this side of the Channel. Thus there is no denying that, on the whole, the French drama is in a much more satisfactory and promising condition than ours.

At the same time, the comparison is by no means so humiliating—nay, impossible—as it would have been twenty years ago. Then there was practically no English drama to place in the scales ; for Robertson was dead, Albery's wit had run hopelessly to waste, and the real though blundering talent of Wills had obviously seen its best days. Now we have one dramatist whom our neighbours may well envy us, and half a dozen who can be pitted against any half-dozen of their French contemporaries without producing an effect of ludicrous disparity. As we look back over the season 1897-98, we cannot but feel that what we lack is not talent, but moderately favourable material conditions under which to exercise and develop it. The season has not been a particularly brilliant one, as seasons go ; yet the nine months which have given us *One Summer's Day*, *The Liars*, *The Little*

Minister, Peter the Great, Trelawny of the "Wells," Lora and Lady Algy, and The Ambassador cannot be called utterly barren. What seems to me specially encouraging is the fact that two well-known writers of fiction, Mr. Barrie and Mrs. Craigie, have joined the ranks of the dramatists, and that with striking success. *The Little Minister*, indeed, does not represent the best part of Mr. Barrie's talent, but it shows that he has the root of the matter—the true dramatic instinct—in him ; while Mrs. Craigie, in *The Ambassador*, has shown not merely instinct, but a remarkable degree of accomplishment. Furthermore, it must be noted that the most significant event of the theatrical season did not occur in the theatre, but in the book-market—the appearance of Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Candida*. The fact that this play and *The Devil's Disciple* still await production in London shows that the conditions of the theatre are hostile to originality ; but the existence of such originality is the main thing ; it must, in the long run, make its own conditions.

“RAGGED ROBIN”

LET me make a clean breast of it at once : I am violently prejudiced against *Ragged Robin*. If I had my will, I should say, “Va, Chemineau, chemine—back to France !” What laziness, what superstition, what reactionism is this, that makes our leading managers prick up their ears and scurry off to Paris the moment a rumour reaches them that some play has had a little bit of success ! I am a theatrical Protectionist, and I care not who knows it. In my opinion, the gentlemen who are conferring and memorialising over Municipal Theatres and State Opera Houses would be at least as practically employed in promoting a Tariff Bill for safeguarding the British dramatist against the pressure of foreign competition. A nice little impost—say ten per cent of the gross receipts on translations and fifteen per cent on adaptations in which the scene is transferred to England—would do a power of good. It would bring little enough into the exchequer (except indirectly, through the additional income-tax paid by native playwrights), but it would save managers from many a blunder, and it would make us a self-supporting, self-respecting nation in matters theatrical. I shall perhaps be reminded that I myself have had some share in importing certain foreign works into England, and that only the other day I went into ecstasies over a translation from an alien tongue. But “*de minimis non curat lex*.” The Custom House lets you bring in the tobacco in your pouch and the cognac in your pocket-flask,

duty free. Ibsen and Maeterlinck compete with no one. Managers do not speculate in them blindly, pay extravagant sums for the "refusal" of their plays, and exploit them to the exclusion of native talent. They are mere side-shows, which please a few and hurt nobody. I have shown elsewhere that Ibsen has, on the whole, paid his way on the London stage, and left a little over; but that is only because his plays can be, and have been, very inexpensively produced. Some people have imagined that I am deeply mortified, and embittered towards the stage in general, because Ibsen has not been patronised by the actor-managers and forced upon the great public. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reception of Ibsen in England has been all that could be expected or desired. I have never mentioned his name to a manager who had not first mentioned it to me. The critics (or perhaps I should say the ex-critic) who used to talk and write as though theatrical progress meant nothing but the more frequent performance of Ibsen's plays, did a great deal to bring the idea of progress into disrepute. What we want is English plays, not Ibsen's nor another's—plays which mirror our own life, utter our own thoughts, deal with our own problems, satirise our own foibles, interpret the character, the ideals, the genius of our race. It is true that a worthy English theatre would give hospitality to the classics of foreign drama—such of them as could be translated without losing all their grace and savour. But that is a totally different affair from confessing a shameful spiritual vassalage to France by rushing and wrangling for the latest Parisian novelties, forcing them neck and crop into an English garb, and thus robbing them of whatever truth to nature and literary charm they may originally have possessed.

Take the particular case in point—the Richepin-Parker *Ragged Robin*. M. Richepin is a rhetorician, or let us say a poet, of great skill. Good critics admire his Alexandrines prodigiously, and I myself, though I don't

understand the niceties of French prosody, can take pleasure in such lines as these—

Dis-leur que son pays, c'est le pays entier,
Le grand pays, dont la grand'route est le sentier . . .
Et le soleil, et l'ombre, et les fleurs, et les eaux,
Et toutes les forêts avec tous leurs oiseaux.

This is very pretty, and in this sort of thing M. Richepin is inexhaustible ; whereas no one pretends that he is a great dramatist, that the substance of his work, stripped of its rhetorical trappings, has any particular merit. But that is precisely what we get, and all we can possibly get, in English. The French Alexandrine has no equivalent (none that is conceivable on the stage, at any rate) in English verse. Consequently the only thing to be done is to re-tell his story in prose. And what is his story? A feeble rustic romance, conventional enough in its original French setting, flagrantly unreal when transferred to Dorsetshire. The “Chemineau,” one is fain to believe, may have some distant prototype in the warmer climate and among the simpler populace of Southern France. At any rate, we are willing to accept him as a poetic fantasy, without inquiring too closely into his foundation in fact. But make the “Chemineau” an English tramp ; translate his poetry into unnatural prose (unnatural because its broken-winged rhetoric keeps reminding us that it once was verse, but has come down in the world) ; and this peripatetic philosopher, this Admirable Crichton of the King’s Highway, becomes too flatly incredible to enlist even our provisional interest, our momentary credulity. M. Richepin bribes us with his rich rhymes to an effort of make-believe ; poor Mr. Parker has no such inducement to offer. And putting aside all notion of Dorsetshire or of Touraine, and regarding the thing simply as a pastoral romance in the abstract, we find it trivial to the point of puerility. The first act is well enough—a piece of simple rustic drama, which, but for Robin’s rodomontade, might be plausible enough to boot. The first scene of the

second act would be strongly dramatic but for a curious ambiguity. Does Jan Perrot, or does he not, know before Farmer Stokes blurts it out that Jack is not his son? If he knows, the scene loses half its interest, and his fierce frenzy seems disproportionate. If he does not know, he must be singularly dense, for Alison gave him fair enough warning in the preceding act. Be this as it may, all thought of serious drama ends here. The second scene of the second act merely serves to bring Ragged Robin on the stage again; the third is a piece of preposterous farce, in which the gipsy bamboozles the superstitious farmer; and at its end the play is over. The fourth act is given up entirely to determining whether the tramp shall settle down among his kindred, or shall continue to pad the hoof; and words fail me to express the indifference with which I await his decision. We know beforehand that he is going to say "Va, Chemineau, chemine!" but if he had said "J'y suis, j'y reste!" we should have found it just as touching and twenty times more probable.

Mr. Louis Parker, by the way, has done his work of adaptation as well as it could be done. Nothing that I have said above implies any slight upon him. But is it not deplorable that a man of Mr. Parker's talent should have to waste his time on such unworthy tasks? Except in the art of stringing Alexandrines, Mr. Parker is as good a man as M. Richepin, any day. If Mr. Tree wanted a Dorsetshire pastoral, why did he not commission Mr. Parker to write one? It would certainly have been a better play than this. But Mr. Tree did not want a Dorsetshire pastoral; what he wanted was a Parisian success; and he seized upon *Le Chemineau*, regardless of the fact that the qualities which had made, and had in some measure justified, its success in Paris, were incapable of transference to England. It was not exhilarating, last season, to see the Lyceum stage given up for months to a thin and mechanical piece of Sardouism; but at least *Madame Sans-Gêne* was actually Sardou's work, faithfully and adequately translated.

’Twas a poor thing, but his own ; it was, on its humble level, a piece of French literature ; whereas *Ragged Robin* is neither French nor English, neither flesh nor fowl, but a pitiable nondescript, like a peacock stripped of its tail feathers and dyed gray. And if this is the fate of *Le Chemineau*, what will become of *Cyrano de Bergerac* ? I am reading it at this moment with wonder and delight ; rumour has in no way exaggerated its extraordinary brilliancy. But an angel from heaven could not translate it without losing nine-tenths of its beauty and spirit ; and where is the pleasure in seeing a mutilated masterpiece ? Sir Henry Irving’s recent efforts to encourage native talent deserve all recognition, and every one must regret that they have not been more fortunate ; but there are a good many English dramatists still untried at the Lyceum.

Time was when, for one reason or another, dramatic talent was almost extinct in England, while French dramatists were actively producing translatable or adaptable plays. In those days managers naturally looked to Paris as the fountain-head of the European drama. Those days are long past. Exportable plays are now rare in France, and dramatists are now comparatively plentiful in England. The conditions of their art and the prospects of its development would be far more favourable were they freed from a foreign competition which has no basis in sound policy, but is a survival from a bygone order of things. It was in jest, of course, that I proposed protective legislation ; but “ the drama’s laws the drama’s patrons give,” and it is in no jesting spirit that I adjure the public resolutely to discountenance the belated managerial superstition that Paris is the dramatic capital of England, and London one of its suburbs.

“CYRANO DE BERGERAC”

As modesty is certainly not one of the virtues inculcated by *Cyrano de Bergerac*, I am tempted to consider whether there be not some hidden affinity between M. Edmond Rostand and myself. When *La Princesse Lointaine* was produced in 1895, I was one of the very few critics who wrote of it with enthusiasm. M. Sarcey descended on it like a steam-hammer, declaring it obscure, “fatiguing and painful.” It had few champions in Paris, and none, that I remember, in London. To me it seemed singularly subtle and beautiful, and I said so without reserve. When *Cyrano de Bergerac*, on the other hand, appeared in Paris, all the critics were beside themselves with delight. M. Sarcey was cordial, M. Faguet, usually so staid and unemotional, became dithyrambic. It was the finest play of the half-century, the harbinger of a new era in dramatic poetry—

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.

(I am not at all exaggerating M. Faguet’s ecstasies). “Aha!” thought I, “for once I ‘spotted a winner’ in M. Rostand!” and went about meditating a little fanfaronade, to the popular tune of “I told you so!” when the piece should be brought to London. The critics have perversely discounted my trumpet solo, by failing to echo the raptures of Paris. It is not much good saying “I told you so!” to people who are still unconvinced of M. Ros-

tand's merits. At the same time, I am not to be balked of my little chuckle of self-satisfaction. I backed M. Rostand for a place, and, whatever London may say, there is no doubt that, over his own Parisian course, he has romped in an easy winner.

The master qualities of *Cyrano de Bergerac* are two : its inexhaustible, scintillating wit, and the fertility of dramatic invention displayed, not so much in the general scheme, as in details of scenic effect, and in the artful interplay of dialogue and “business.” Have you ever rowed on a gently-heaving sea, where each wave, as it arched its back, suddenly kindled into golden fire, while your oars at every stroke seemed to make a vortex of molten gold, and to drip gold into the golden ripples ? It is of such lambent, all-pervading, irrepressible phosphorescence that M. Rostand's wit reminds me. It is too suave, and indeed too continuous, to be called pyrotechnic. The mind seems to be rocked on a sea of fantasy, shimmering on every hand into wavelets of wit. The well-nourished ease of his style is superb. Speaking with all diffidence, as a foreigner with an imperfect ear for French rhythms, I should say that Cyrano equalled his distinguished progenitor, Don César de Bazan (of the fourth act of *Ruy Blas*), in the voluble sonority of his diction, and greatly surpassed him in the buoyancy, variety, and poetic beauty of his wit. The whole play—and this, I think, some critics fail to perceive or to consider—the whole play is steeped in verbal music. It is not, to my taste, the finest quality of verbal music ; there is too much tintinnabulation about it ; the cymbals and the triangle are too busy in the orchestra. But though we may prefer subtler, suppler, and statelier harmonies, without a “ting,” like a typewriter's bell, at the end of every line, yet this music is, after its kind, composed by a master hand ; and it ought to exempt the piece from prosaic criticism. It is a literary opera, with the instrumental accompaniment omitted, but with recitatives, arias, duets, trios, concerted pieces, even

choruses, all in due form. One leaves the Lyceum humming airs from it, just as one leaves the Savoy after a Gilbert-and-Sullivan first night. The particular refrain that haunted me most persistently was the stirring

Ce sont les cadets de Gascogne
De Carbon de Castel-Jaloux !

—but a dozen others are running in my head at this moment. Take for instance this solo of Cyrano's, addressed to his starving comrades in the trenches—

Ah ça ! mais vous ne pensez qu'à manger ?
—Approche, Bertrandou le fifre, ancien berger ;
Du double étui de cuir tire l'un de tes fifres,
Souffle, et joue à ce tas de goinfres et de piffres
Ces vieux airs du pays, au doux rythme ôbsesseur,
Dont chaque note est comme une petite sœur,
Dans lesquels restent pris des sons de voix aimées,
Ces airs dont la lenteur est celle des fumées
Que le hameau natal exhale de ses toits,
Ces airs dont la musique a l'air d'être en patois !

Écoutez, les Gascons ! Ce n'est plus, sous ses doigts,
Le fifre aigu des camps, c'est la flûte des bois !
Ce n'est plus le sifflet du combat, sous ses lèvres,
C'est le lent galoubet de nos meneurs de chèvres !
Écoutez ! C'est le val, la lande, la forêt,
Le petit pâtre brun sous son rouge béret,
C'est la verte douceur des soirs sur la Dordogne.
Écoutez, les Gascons : c'est toute la Gascogne !

This, in its context, is dramatic as well as lyrical ; but lyrical it is, first and foremost. The great art of M. Rostand, it seems to me, lies in the absolute fusion of his poetry with his drama, the complete interpenetration of the two elements. Phrases abound, not by the score but by the hundred, of which we find it difficult to determine whether their fitness to the rhyme-scheme or to the dramatic situation is the more exquisite and satisfying. But of course it is only a certain class of subject that lends itself to the florid lyrical treatment which M. Rostand

has made, so to speak, the law of this romance. He wanted to provide a unique bravura part for Coquelin, that incomparable master of mordant, fantastic, defiant, ironical, and even tender diction. This desire imposed on him a theme of gay and vivid externality rather than of psychological depth. In *La Princesse Loïtaine* he had shown analytic insight and a power of handling tragic conflicts; but for the present these qualities must be left in abeyance. There is a time for Racine and a time for Victor Hugo; and this was not the time for Racine. The problem was to drape Coquelin in the cloak and sword of D'Artagnan, while giving him the eloquence and the fantasy of Don César. This problem M. Rostand has solved, and more than solved. Never, surely, has a one-part play, a play written to the measure of a single actor, turned out such a rounded and vital work of art. For out of the humanity and charm of his own genius, M. Rostand has given his D'Artagnan a heart as well as a sword, and ennobled his Don César with a dash of the Don Quixote.

Having thus denied the jurisdiction of prosaic or rationalistic criticism, one may freely admit that the piece will not bear examination from the prosaic or rationalistic point of view. Cyrano is a character devised from first to last to amuse the imagination; in real life he would be neither possible nor desirable. “What!” cries the matter-of-fact critic, “your imagination is pleased with figments which you admit to be incredible, or, if credible, unpleasant!” Why, certainly. That paradox lies at the root of half the pleasure we take in art. The very child who screams with glee at the rogueries of the clown, knows in his heart that if that fascinating desperado laid about him in the real street with a real red-hot poker, our sympathies would chop round, and we should applaud the real policeman who haled him away to Bow Street. At the other end of dramatic art, Sir John Falstaff is another case in point. There are critics, as we know, who can see in Falstaff nothing but a disgusting old mountain of highly alcoholised

flesh, and would consign him, if they could, to an asylum for inebriates. To this strange literalness of mind (which may coexist, oddly enough, with a strong sense of humour) many of the finest things in literature are either as dust and ashes in the mouth, or to be enjoyed only under protest. Such critics are not merely the Puritans but the Quakers of the æsthetic world. They insist that the yea of art shall be yea, and its nay, nay, to the end of the chapter. In *Cyrano* they would see nothing but a brawler, a braggart, a swashbuckler, a mountebank, and, to crown all, a puling sentimentalist. He has certainly no right to put a stop to a theatrical performance because he dislikes one of the actors. That is an anti-social proceeding, the conduct of a "bounder" who ought to be, and would be, condignly dealt with by the proper authorities. Then we do not really believe (though this purports to be historical !) that he put to flight a hundred bravos ; and even if his sword really slays hundreds, his boastfulness slays thousands. Again, he is prime mover in an ignoble fraud upon an innocent lady, helping a pitiful stockfish of a musketeer to foist himself upon her as a poet and wit of the first water. Finally, when the musketeer is dead, and the lady is heartbroken to think that his wit and poetry have died with him, *Cyrano*, out of sheer maudlin sentimentality, leaves her unconsolated for fourteen years, and reveals to her only when it is too late that what she really loved in *Christian* was not in *Christian* at all, and consequently did not die with him, but has been living at her side all the time. "There is neither human nature nor common-sense in all this !" cries matter-of-fact criticism. "It is all preposterous pose and gasconade !" Yes, that is the word ! The whole romance is a magnificent gasconade, the apotheosis of the Gascon ; and I, a canny Scot, born at the spiritual antipodes of Gascony, rejoice in it with exceeding great joy. Common-sense is represented in the play by *Cyrano's* friend, the worthy *Le Bret*. When *Cyrano* has flung his purse to the comedians, with

the whole of his “pension paternelle,” Le Bret remonstrates—

“LE BRET. Pour vivre tout un mois, alors ?

“CYRANO. Rien ne me reste.

“LE BRET. Jeter ce sac, quelle sottise !

“CYRANO. Mais quel geste !”

—and the retort seems to me quite conclusive. Again, on the common earth or the common stage there is nothing that pleases me less than the “splendid mendacity” of useless self-sacrifice ; but Cyrano’s fourteen-years’ silence is amply justified to me by this passage in the last act, when Roxane has discovered the truth—

“ROXANE. Vous m’aimiez !

“CYRANO. Non !

“ROXANE. Déjà vous le dites plus bas !

“CYRANO. Non, non, mon cher amour, je ne vous aimais pas !

“ROXANE. Ah ! que de choses qui sont mortes—qui sont nées !

—Pourquoi vous être tu pendant quatorze années,

Puisque sur cette lettre où, lui, n’était pour rien
Ces pleurs étaient de vous ?

“CYRANO [*lui tendant la lettre*] Ce sang était le sien.”

This is nonsense if you like, but it is sublime and beautiful nonsense. I do not know many more pathetic lines in drama than the dying man’s

Non, non, *mon cher amour*, je ne vous aimais pas.

My championship of the play goes beyond even M. Faguet’s. He disliked the fourth act (the camp) and spoke slightly of the fifth. To my mind there is nothing more ingenious and beautiful in the play than the

whole of the last scene, with its delightful allusion to Molière, and Cyrano's Viking-like determination not to die a pitiful "straw-death," but to meet the Enemy sword in hand. As for the fourth act, it seems to me vivid, amusing, essential to the dramatic development, and more than redeemed, if it needed redemption, by that exquisite eulogy of the Gascon folk-song which I have quoted above.

It is much disputed whether *Cyrano de Bergerac* gains or loses by stage presentation. The dispute is idle : it ought to be both seen and read, read and seen. Many points are to my thinking obscured and lost by the summary methods of French stage-management, necessitated by the extreme length of the text. The first act especially would play for about two hours if it were taken in such moderate time as to give each incident its full effect. As it is, everything is feverishly accelerated, like the movements we see in a cinematograph. On the other hand, it is surely beyond all question that many of the scenes, and almost all the great speeches, gain by the extraordinary brilliancy of M. Coquelin's action and delivery. It is said that he is not sincere, not pathetic enough : he would be out of the picture were he more so. We do not want realism, we want fantasy, even in the scenes of passion and pathos. The whole fabric is artificial, and an absolutely real hero would tear it to shreds. There would have been no harm, I take it, in a more picturesque, and perhaps an uglier Cyrano. M. Coquelin, in all he does, is dapper rather than flamboyant. But his diction was unsurpassable. In the scenes of tenderness and melancholy it had all the sincerity that consists with this particular literary form. The part, as I have said, is a bravura part ; virtuosity is what it chiefly demands ; but both author and actor are as sincere as they can be, considering how diabolically clever they are. In the last act I thought M. Coquelin genuinely moving.

SARAH BERNHARDT

MME. BERNHARDT has taken, it seems to me, a new lease of—art. She is acting incomparably better this season than last. I remember with painful distinctness her Frou-frou at the Adelphi last June, and a heart-breaking performance it was, in its frenzied violence and mechanical exaggeration. At the Lyric last Friday it was a totally different thing. The actress has regained measure, self-control, almost, one might say, sincerity. Her great scene with Louise was admirable, and in the fourth and fifth acts she took hold of me and moved me deeply—the first time for many a day. One little incident may typify the change : last year she must needs break the glass of water which Sartorys refuses to accept from her hand ; this year she puts it down simply and naturally. This is but one change in a thousand, and all are for the better. Even in *Lysiane*, with which her season opened, one could not but discern a novel touch of sincerity. But the part, as a whole, is singularly ineffective. It affords Mme. Bernhardt only one scene of any importance, and even there she has nothing deeper than a touch of temper to portray. M. Romain Coolus is certainly not a born dramatist, else he could have made something more even out of this trivial and well-worn theme. He has written a sketch in four acts, not a play. A rich widow is sought in marriage by an honourable and devoted lover and by a fortune-hunting swindler—Act I. The lover, having chanced upon

proof of the swindler's villainy, forces him, in the conventional cat-and-mouse, Mildmay-Hawksley scene, to turn tail and run away—Act II. The widow, on learning that the lover has saved her in spite of herself, is very angry, and threatens to bestow her hand and fortune on the swindler none the less—Act III. On reflection, she thinks better of it, and marries the lover—Act IV. There are possible elements of strength in this theme. The adventurer, like *L'Aventurière* of Augier's play, might fight an adroit and obstinate battle ; but, as a matter of fact, he makes no fight whatever. We might be made to sympathise with the struggle in Lysiane's soul between passion and disillusionment ; but the struggle, such as it is, takes place behind the scenes, and, as Lysiane comes up smiling in the last act, we feel that her fancy for the adventurer must have been superficial enough. Thus the play exists, in the last analysis, for the sake of a scene of mere temper ; and though Mme. Bernhardt plays it admirably, it leaves our sympathies untouched.

“ BLANCHETTE ”

WE have to thank Messrs. J. T. Grein and M. L. Churchill for a good translation of M. Brieux's three-act play *Blanchette*, produced before an invited audience at the little West Theatre of the Albert Hall. M. Brieux is one of the rising lights of the French stage, and has done much interesting work since *Blanchette* brought him into notice at the Théâtre Libre. When the play was recently revived, the author provided it with a new last act, a “happy ending”; and in this form it is now presented. It is at once a picture of French provincial life, and a “problem play” in the exact sense of that much-abused term. It deals with the problem of over-education—the hapless lot of the young woman who has been educated to despise and shrink from the manners and customs of her peasant parents, yet can find no place on the higher social level to which she aspires. She and her parents think that the Government which has given her a teacher's diploma is thereby bound to provide her with employment to match; but she is five-thousandth on the list of applicants for employment, and there is not the smallest chance of her turn being reached for years. Meanwhile she shrinks from the coarse work, the childish superstitions, the petty dishonesties of her village home; quarrels with her parents; goes through all sorts of toils and temptations in Paris; and finally returns, broken-spirited, to marry the peasant suitor she has formerly contemned. Despite this banal

solution of the problem, the play is full of cleverness, and was well worth presenting, for once in a way, to an English audience.

It is not in the least desirable that this picture of French manners and discussion of a French problem (or at least a French phase of a problem which assumes a different guise on this side of the Channel) should become widely popular in England. There is certainly none of that genius in *Blanchette* which delocalises a play and lifts it into the universal-human sphere. Yet the piece conveys a lesson to which I would earnestly beg the attention of English playwrights. In point of abstract talent, so to speak, and technical accomplishment, more than one of them could give M. Brieux points ; but which of them has his direct outlook upon life, and his intelligent grasp of the social problems of the day ? Here M. Brieux gives us scenes of peasant life ; in other plays he takes us into different circles of Parisian society, the charitable world, the world of finance, and so forth. Our dramatists have apparently no eyes for anything but a more or less conventional upper-middle-class, drawing-room society. If they go into low life at all, they see it not with their own eyes, but through the spectacles of Dickens. Which of them, for example, has intelligently grasped such a problem as that which M. Brieux here handles ? I cannot think of any single English play in the least analogous to *Blanchette* ; yet there is certainly quite as much drama in the life of the English lower-middle and lower classes as in that of the French bourgeoisie and proletariat. The problems our playwrights deal with are problems of "society," not of sociology ; and that implies a deplorable limitation of their domain. I believe one chief reason of the present cape-and-sword craze or Dumas-mania is that the public is sick and tired of the conventional Mayfair drawing-room in which our dramatists seem to have imprisoned their imagination and intelligence.

THE MUSKETEER MANIA

I. AT THE GLOBE

LITTLE need be said of Mr. Henry Hamilton's *Three Musketeers* at the Globe, except that it is amazing how much both of the letter and the spirit of the great romance he has contrived to get into the three hours' traffic of the scene. The piece is rudely carpentered enough, and written with a very rough-and-ready pen; it is a heroic farce, rather than a serious drama; but it has gaiety, movement, vitality, and—most essential of all—the quality which Cyrano de Bergerac would describe as “panache.” Moreover, it is played with vigour, rapidity, and evident enjoyment. Oh, that managers could be persuaded to infuse a little of this “go” into their Shakespearean solemnities! The only scene that seemed to me to drag a little was that between Buckingham and Anne of Austria; it would bear curtailment.

Shall I confess that as the rush and whirl of the romance took hold of me, and the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis spoke trumpet-like to my blood, I could have wept to think of this gay and gallant France, and of the evil days on which she has fallen? One cannot believe in such blind malignity of fate as should bring her into conflict with England; but her conflict with herself is tragic enough in all conscience. How impossible to-day seems the superb, virile, one might almost say boyish

serenity of mood to which the world owes *The Three Musketeers* and all their joyous company ! How dismal and malodorous seems the literature of to-day beside these sane and wholesome creations, sparkling with the joy of life ! It was not very long after the Musketeers made their first appearance that the sky began to cloud over ; and it has gone on darkening ever since. On coming home from the theatre, I took down and re-read that noble tribute paid by the Younger to the Elder Dumas in the preface to *Le Fils Naturel*. Here it is—

“ . . . Then began that cyclopean industry which has never ceased for forty years. Tragedy, drama, history, romance, travel, comedy, you have recast them all in the matrix of your mind, and you have peopled the world of fiction with a new race of beings. . . . The crowd applauded ; for at bottom it loves fecundity in production, strength tempered with grace, and genius with simplicity. You had fecundity, simplicity, grace, and (let me not forget) that generosity which has made you a millionaire for others, and left you poor for yourself. Then, one fine day, there came inattention, indifference, ingratitude on the part of that crowd which you had hitherto held spell-bound. It listened to other voices, telling other tales. You had been too lavish of your gifts ; and now, behold ! we had come, we, the children, we, the younger and the lesser generation, who had meanwhile been shooting up, and who did the opposite of what you had done, you of the great race. That was all. You had become, for the respectful, ‘Dumas père,’ for the insolent, ‘le père Dumas ;’ and amidst all the clamours and confusions of the time, you must sometimes have heard this phrase, ‘Decidedly, his son has more talent than he !’ How you must have laughed !

“Ah, no ! you did not laugh ; you were proud, you were happy, like the most commonplace father in the world. You asked for nothing better than to believe—

perhaps you *did* believe—what they said. Dear great man, simple-minded and good! who would have given me your glory as you gave me your money when I was young and idle, I am happy to have at last found the fitting opportunity to bow down before you in public, to do you homage in the full light of day, and to embrace you, as I love you, in face of the future. Let others of my age and standing, who do not bear your name, declare themselves your equals, if they think fit; I need neither reproach nor envy them, I, who would be as famous as they by the mere fact of being your son. But I am resolved that posterity, when it reads your name and mine in the schedule of the century, shall know of a surety that I have never seen in you aught else than my father, my friend, and my master. I count myself fortunate in this, that I could never, in your great presence, exaggerate my personal claims, never think of myself otherwise than as a very child in comparison with so redoubtable a father."

This was written in 1868. Two years afterwards, in the blackest days of 1870, the father died; and a quarter of a century later, the son followed him to the undiscovered country. Both loved France with a passionate devotion. If they could come to life again to-morrow, and see her as she now is, one cannot but fancy them saying with our own pessimist poet: "Oh, why did I awake? When shall I sleep again?"

II. AT HER MAJESTY'S

Mr. Beerbohm Tree evidently thinks—and with some justice—that the shining merit of his artistic achievement in restoring *Julius Cæsar* to the stage has earned him a dispensation from further good works (in an artistic sense) for an indefinite time to come. He has laid up such a treasure

of righteousness, that he feels he can, without absolutely imperilling his immortal soul, let himself go a little in the other direction. Not that there was any great harm in *Ragged Robin*, or that *The Musketeers* can be reckoned a highly deleterious entertainment. The sense of incongruity which one feels on finding the best-appointed theatre in London devoted to such work is entirely irrational. There is no necessary connection between a fine theatre and fine plays, and the splendours of Her Majesty's, in so far as they (presumably) add to the expenses of management, impose a burden rather than an obligation on Mr. Tree, and may be held to palliate his unambitious and Gallicising policy. At the same time it is only human to regret that such a splendid mechanism as Mr. Tree controls should be applied to such trumpery purposes. During the eighteen months of his management at his new theatre, he has done nothing, literally and absolutely nothing, for the living English drama. Neither Mr. Pinero, nor Mr. Jones, nor Mr. Esmond, nor Mr. Carton, nor Mr. Barrie, has found access to Her Majesty's stage, while Mr. Grundy and Mr. Parker have figured only as adapters. His one ambitious and worthy effort has been a Shakespearean revival; and behold! instead of taking courage from its well-merited success, he forthwith falls back upon adaptations and puerilities. As regards acting, except in that one revival, he has neither added to his own reputation nor given the members of his excellent company any opportunities worthy of the name. His Mark Antony, whatever one might think of its methods, was a serious impersonative effort; his other new parts have demanded no effort whatever, but have simply enabled him to follow the line of least resistance and to exploit his personality in what he considers its most advantageous aspects. It was not thus that Mr. Tree made his fame, it is certainly not thus that he will enhance or even sustain it. He may win temporary success by posing in French fripperies; but if he is to leave behind him the reputation of a

great manager and a great actor, it must be by far other means.

For the present, since the public imagination, adroitly stimulated by the paragraphists, seems definitely to have gone a-musketeering, these particular *Musketeers* will probably serve their turn well enough. The costumes are gay, the sword-play spirited and dangerous-looking, and, as every one knows the story beforehand, it does not in the least matter what gaps and chasms there may be in the telling of it. I have no sentiment whatever against the dramatisation of novels, old or new, good, bad, or indifferent. A copyright novel should, of course, be protected against unauthorised dramatisation so long as the copyright lasts; but the attempt to whirl a flaming sword round all the great novels of the past is a mere sentimental futility. Many novels, indeed, effectually protect themselves against dramatisation by having no drama in them. If any one is misguided enough to try to put them on the stage, it is the dramatiser that suffers and not the novelist. As for those novels which have a drama in them, they are predestined to the stage and must dree their weird. Something they must suffer, no doubt, in the process of compression and manipulation; but those who insist on the book, the whole book, and nothing but the book, can always stop away from the theatre. I must say that in the case of Alexandre the Great, who was himself the first to hack and hew his romances into theatrical form, such bibliolatry seems to me peculiarly out of place. To talk of the present *Musketeer* mania as an injury to Dumas is sheer perversity. On the contrary, it is a splendid testimony to his genius and to the vitality of his creations. For my own part, I even think it a little exaggerated, and regret that Her Majesty's Theatre should be devoted for months to an act of homage to foreign genius, instead of to the fostering of the home-grown article. But after all, it is a good thing that genius should over-ride frontiers and ignore even "silver streaks." One cannot altogether

deplore the movement which is making the names of Athos, Porthos, and Aramis household words over the length and breadth of Britain.

Since comparison is inevitable, it must be said quite frankly that Mr. Grundy's *Musketeers* are not so lively and amusing as Mr. Hamilton's. Mr. Grundy has not got nearly so much of Dumas over the footlights as his competitor. His two opening scenes are unnecessary and tedious. In his third tableau we reach the point at which Mr. Hamilton sets forth; and the rest of the action is necessarily even more spasmodic and huddled than that of the earlier version. Point by point, one may almost say, the play is less effective, less amusing, less dramatic than its predecessor. Making every allowance for Mr. Hamilton's fortuitous advantage in being first in the field, I cannot but think that the inherent advantages are on his side as well. For instance, the adventure of the diamonds is made amazingly credible and comprehensible in Mr. Hamilton's version; in Mr. Grundy's we have to supply it all from memory, and the only dramatic moment is furnished by Mr. Gillette's ingenious machine for imitating the galloping of horses. Nothing could well be feebler as an act-ending than the entrance of the panting and travel-stained Musketeers; while the Queen's revelation of the jewels, and the checkmating of Richelieu, were curiously ineffective. It is needless, however, to go into a detailed comparison. The matter is infinitely unimportant, and there seems to be ample room in the public affections for two, or even more, sets of Musketeers. Those who want spirit, dash, and gaiety will go to the Globe; those who want costumes, horseflesh, and a lesser but still respectable amount of the more essential qualities will go to Her Majesty's. Most people, I doubt not, will go to both.

MR. HENLEY'S POEMS

AGREEABLE to hand and eye, without prettiness or pettiness, this book presents Mr. Henley's poems in entirely appropriate garb. Its page is clear and attractive, and proportioned—a point too often neglected in latter-day books of verse—so as to show at a glance the contour of a stanza. It has for frontispiece a good photogravure of Rodin's vivid and forceful bust of the author. Altogether, it is a book we can accept with unmixed satisfaction, as the Library Henley, without by any means dismissing from our affections the Pocket Henleys of old. The new numbers, with the exception of "Arabian Nights Entertainments" and a poignantly beautiful "Epilogue," are not of the first importance; and the exclusions, mainly from the "Bric-à-brac" of the 1888 edition, are judicious enough. It gives one a little shock of alarm to hear that a favourite poet has been tampering with his text; but Mr. Henley's alterations, so far as I have noted them, are in no way vital. Here and there one mildly applauds them; nowhere do they seem to call for protest. After all, as Mr. Henley says in his preface, "his verses are his own, and this is how he would have them read."

It is almost incredible, though believe it we must since Mr. Henley says so, that for ten or fifteen years he found himself, as a poet, "utterly unmarketable," and that his "Hospital" sequence was "rejected by every editor of standing in London." Who were these editors? It were

wiser not to inquire ; for the law does not permit us, without good and sufficient reason, to drag to the light of day the stains upon a man's past. Some of the editors, no doubt, have by this time gone to be edited themselves ; and, if literary sins count for aught in the reckoning, they shall hardly 'scape the Waste-Paper Basket. For these "Hospital Rhymes and Rhythms," though they do not mark the summit of Mr. Henley's achievement, should have revealed to any one with half an eye for literary values the presence of a new force in poetry. Probably it was the stark realism of the work that took the editors aback. Accustomed to think of poetry as a golden haze—not to say a golden syrup—in which all harsh outlines must be steeped and softened, they were repelled by the uncompromising significance of every touch in Mr. Henley's masterful etchings. Perhaps "chloroform" was as yet a word unlicensed for poetic uses, as crude as "telephone" or "bicycle" would seem to-day. But it needed no superhuman insight to see that there was not only originality, but knowledge and style, in the man who could write such lines as these :—

Behold me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life—

or who could tell how

the anæsthetic reaches
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder
In a rushing, swaying rapture,
While the voices at your elbow
Fade—receding—fainter—farther.

Lights about you shower and tumble,
And your blood seems crystallising—
Edged and vibrant, yet within you
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Even if such "edged and vibrant" writing jarred on foregone conceptions of poetry, it was surely remarkable enough, simply as writing, to command interest and attention. Condemnable it might be; but what sane editor would hesitate a moment to invite the world to decide the question? And even if the masterly portraiture, the tersely-touched episodes of hospital comedy and tragedy, failed to make their due impression, the pure poetry of such pieces as "Pastoral" and "Nocturn" ought to have been manifest to the meanest intelligence. In "Pastoral" the poet, cabined in the dreary ward, sees a vision of the Spring which is gladdening the world outside :—

Vistas of change and adventure,
 Thro' the green land
 The grey roads go beckoning and winding.
 . . . Green flame the hedgerows.
 Blackbirds are bugling, and white in wet winds
 Sway the tall poplars.
 O, the brilliance of blossoming orchards,
O, the savour and thrill of the woods,
When their leafage is stirred
By the flight of the Angel of Rain!
 Loud lows the steer; in the fallows
 Rooks are alert; and the brooks
 Gurgle and tinkle and trill. Thro' the gloaming,
 Under the rare, shy stars,
 Boy and girl wander,
 Dreaming in darkness and dew.

What nimbleness, what multiplicity of sensation there is in this poem! How fresh, how cool and dewy it is! And, though the lines are not minted to pattern, like rouleaux of five-shilling pieces, or alternate crowns and dollars, what a perfect sense of rhythmic beauty informs them! The poem lacks imagery, some may say; but imagery is the ornament, not the essential substance, of poetry. To attain beauty without ornament is perhaps a greater, certainly a harder, task than to pile trope on trope, and figure on figure. And if it comes to that, I should be glad to hear of a lovelier image than the one I have italicised.

The impermeable density of the Able Editors had the effect of practically putting Mr. Henley to silence during ten of the best years of his life, and thus notably impoverishing English poetry. It was by a sort of chance that in 1888 the *Hospital Rhythms*, with the "Echoes" and "Bric-à-Brac" at last saw the light. Among the "Echoes" were "Out of the night that covers me," the "King in Babylon," "On the way to Kew," "To R. L. S.," "Margaritæ Sorori," and other noble numbers; among the "Bric-à-Brac" were the "Ballade of Midsummer Days and Nights" and the "Ballade made in Hot Weather"; but still criticism, except in one or two quarters, was half-hearted if not supercilious. Then came the second booklet (1892). In "The Song of the Sword," "London Voluntaries," and the "Rhymes and Rhythms" which eked out the little volume, Mr. Henley had shaken off the influence of Heine, occasionally traceable in his earlier work, and soared into the sphere of Milton. Squarely based on the magnificent success of the four "London Voluntaries," his reputation was now secure. Yet it has taken six years for the mass of the reading public to realise how indisputable is his place in the foremost rank of our poets. To praise him now is to beat at an open door; but truly the hinges have been long a-turning.

Why has it taken Mr. Henley all these years to come into his kingdom? Because of the small bulk of his writings, say some, no doubt with partial truth. But there is more than this in the matter. The essential truth is, I believe, that Mr. Henley does not deal in the kinds of poetry which most readily catch the public ear. He does not write ballads, he does not confect idylls, he does not psychologise, he does not philosophise on current topics—agnosticism, or heredity, or trade-unionism, or what not. There is no story in his poems, no drama, no allegory. They are never versified leading-articles. They do not make for edification, or, to use the more popular

catchword, for "culture"; and, their meaning being as clear as daylight, they offer no scope for co-operative conjecture. Mr. Henley, in his verse, is two things: a painter-etcher and a pure lyrist. In the former capacity his touch is too stern, too precise, and of too condensed significance to allure the popular eye, which prefers a smoother surface, a more luscious tone. As a lyrist, again, Mr. Henley, though a master-rhymer when he pleases, is apt to renounce the aid of rhyme and strict melodic form. Now the triangle, though we may not realise it, is one of the most popular instruments in the band, and not to be lightly dispensed with. Moreover, though Mr. Henley does not, if I may put it so, deliberately intellectualise, a somewhat aggressive personal philosophy runs through his lyrics—a grim stoicism, with an inclination to envisage life in its grotesquer aspects. This is not pleasing to many worthy people. Ladies especially, I fancy, resent Mr. Henley's outlook on the world, in which they are apt to figure as "women." Yet again, his sedulous realism of diction, his disuse of the conventional poetic dialect, has tended to retard Mr. Henley's acceptance. He has been handicapped, in a word, by his very strength, and the marked individuality of his temperament. He has been to many people (and not always to the mere Philistine) something of an acquired taste. But the appetite, once awakened, will never be cloyed. It is the saccharine quality in verse that palls, whereas Mr. Henley's is always tonic and astringent. Here, for instance, is a lyric which, once felt, will abide with you for ever:—

To M. E. H.

When you wake in your crib,
You, an inch of experience—
Vaulted about
With the wonder of darkness ;

Wailing and striving
 To reach from your feebleness
 Something you feel
 Will be good to and cherish you,
 Something you know
 And can rest upon blindly :
 O, then a hand
 (Your mother's, your mother's !)
 By the fall of its fingers
 All knowledge, all power to you,
 Out of the dreary,
 Discouraging strangenesses
 Comes to and masters you,
 Takes you, and lovingly
 Woos you and soothes you
 Back, as you cling to it,
 Back to some comforting
 Corner of sleep.

So you wake in your bed,
 Having lived, having loved :
 But the shadows are there,
 And the world and its kingdoms
 Incredibly faded ;
 And you grope through the Terror
 Above you and under
 For the light, for the warmth,
 The assurance of life ;
 But the blasts are ice-born,
 And your heart is nigh burst
 With the weight of the gloom
 And the stress of your strangled
 And desperate endeavour :
 Sudden a hand—
 Mother, O Mother !—
 God at His best to you,
 Out of the roaring,
 Impossible silences,
 Falls on and urges you,
 Mightily, tenderly,
 Forth, as you clutch at it,
 Forth to the infinite
 Peace of the Grave.

Mr. Henley has not, I think, done anything better

than this. Elsewhere, in the poem inscribed "Matri Dilectissimæ," he has written :—

Dearest, live on
In such an immortality
As we thy sons,
Born of thy body and nursed
At those wild faithful breasts,
Can give—of generous thoughts
And honourable words, *and deeds*
That make men half in love with fate !

"To M. E. H.," and many others of Mr. Henley's poems, may well be reckoned among such "deeds."

A SCAMPER THROUGH SYNTAX

"THIS is a book not of Philology, but of Grammar," says Professor Earle, author of *A Simple Grammar of English Now in Use*; and so far as the exclusion of Philology is concerned, he keeps his word. But he includes under the term "grammar" a number of subjects which modern usage (reinforced by convenience) has removed from the domain of the grammarian, strictly so called: prosody, for example, and rhetoric, and even elocution. This is not a merely verbal criticism. Professor Earle has no doubt a perfect right to take "grammar" in whatever sense he pleases; but he has erred, I think, in attempting to deal with such a multiplicity of topics in the space of 220 openly-printed pages. The result is a book which is at once too elementary and too advanced. The schoolboy wants something briefer (or, to put it more accurately, something briefer is required for the schoolboy); while the serious student wants something more thoroughgoing and conclusive. The first book, dealing with the Parts of Speech, is quite elementary; the second and third books, dealing with Syntax and Prosody respectively, are too sketchy to be of much practical use. At the same time, the little treatise is interesting and suggestive throughout. It is capital reading for any one who is theoretically or practically concerned with questions of grammar and style.

Here, as always, Professor Earle shows good taste and sound scholarship ; his error lies in the attempt to cover too much ground. The book is little more than a scamper through syntax.

Let me give some instances of the sketchiness of which I complain. Professor Earle gives the ordinary rule and sub-rules for the Concord of Number between subject and verb : two singular nouns united by *and* take a plural verb ; connected by *or* they require a singular verb ; collective nouns take either a singular or a plural verb ; and certain words which are plural in grammatical form (for instance, "amends" and "means") are psychologically singular, and take a singular verb. All this is simple and obvious ; on only one point of any subtlety does Professor Earle touch, and his remark on that point tends to lead the unwary astray. He writes :—

"It sometimes happens that between a Subject in the Singular Number and its Verb there will intervene one or more plurals affecting the writer's mind with a sense of plurality, and the Verb, which logically should be in the Singular, is by force of attraction written in the Plural Number. Thus : '—— from these errors a *flood* of cares and jealousies and meannesses *have* desolated the life of man.'—F. W. Farrar, *The Life*, ch. vii."

Now the fact surely is that this is a piece of inelegant writing, if not of bad grammar, and that the grammarian ought to deprecate, if not forbid it. *Has*, to be sure, would be almost as bad as *have* ; the whole expression ought to be remodelled. Conjectures are for ever cropping up in which good grammar would sound bad ; but that does not make bad grammar good. The careful writer will not take refuge in phrases about "sense of plurality" and "force of attraction," but will cast about for another form in which to express his thought. Again, there is at least one frequently-recurring difficulty with

regard to Concord of Number which Professor Earle entirely overlooks. Who has not come across cases in which two singular nouns united by *and* do not form a real plural, but express two phases or facets of a single idea, and irresistibly demand a verb in the singular? For instance, would Professor Earle say "Honour and glory are the soldier's reward"? Surely not. In saying "honour and glory" we do not group together two distinct things, but use a sort of intensive tautology, regarding one idea from two slightly different aspects. We might almost hyphenise the phrase, and say "Honour-and-Glory is the soldier's reward." There are cases, in short—some, perhaps, clearer than the one I have cited—in which the conjunction does not merely link but positively fuses the two nouns, so that they run together into one idea. The printer's reader (an inveterate pedant, in all gratitude be it spoken) obstinately declines to see this; and we should have been grateful for a pronouncement that might on occasion have served as a weapon against him. In an appendix of extracts proposed for grammatical criticism, Professor Earle quotes from Francis Jeffrey:—

"The elegance and beauty of this setting, if we may so call it, though entirely modern of workmanship, *appears* to us to be fully more worthy of admiration than the bolder relief of the antiques which it encloses, and *leads* us to regret, etc."

It would be too much to say that the singular verbs, in this instance, are absolutely right; but still less can they be called absolutely wrong. They simply show that in Jeffrey's thought (for the moment, at any rate), "elegance and beauty" constituted one indivisible quality. He could not have written, for example, "The elegance and piety of this poem *appears* to us beyond praise"; for a poem may clearly be elegant without being pious, or pious without being elegant. But he was grammatically,

if not æsthetically, justified in regarding "elegance and beauty" as a single attribute, made more vivid to the reader's apprehension by the use of the two words; just as, in the stereoscope, two almost identical pictures combine to form a peculiarly salient image.

On the burning question of the split infinitive we might surely look to Professor Earle for some guidance, but we find practically none. "I had no space," he may say, "to go into the subject," but that is precisely what I complain of: either the book ought to have been longer, or it should have been entirely elementary, all delicate and complex questions being reserved for another volume. Professor Earle does, indeed, refer to the split infinitive in two places, first on p. 96 :—

"Of late years a turn of fashion has placed the Adverb thus 'to constantly maintain,' as in the following quotation :—'Leafy huts made of the branches which the hill people know how to deftly interweave' (Sir William Hunter, *The Old Missionary*). Then in a footnote :—'I have learnt from Dr. Fitzedward Hall that it is the revival of an old fashion; still, as that old fashion appears to have been little more than scholastic, I venture to call the recent popular change an innovation.'"

Again, on p. 206, we find the following precept :—

"Avoid modishness. Do not use the split Infinitive unless you have a valid reason for it. Old examples can be quoted in some numbers, yet it never was a genuine colloquialism, but only an artificial scholasm. If you think it is an improvement, that it imparts grace or force or clearness to your discourse, then act upon your conviction; but do not adopt it on the rash impulse to burst through every new gap that is made in the hedge."

This deliverance is absolutely ineffectual. What the student looks for in such a treatise as this is guidance on

the very question which Professor Earle leaves to his own unguided taste : *Is* the split infinitive an improvement ? Does it ever "impart grace or clearness" to discourse ? It is not for me to do what Professor Earle has left undone, but I may briefly indicate my own conclusions. There is no logical objection to the split infinitive, and grammatical arguments are of no avail. It is true that writers whose grammatical sense is in the least cultivated prefer to treat the infinitive as one word ; but to say that *it is* one word because in bygone days it *was*, serves only to infuriate the adversary. The practical arguments against the usage are three : (1) it is a vulgarism ; (2) it always enfeebles the phrase ; (3) it scarcely ever makes for clearness. It is a vulgarism because, whatever may be the "old examples" to which Professor Earle alludes—I wish he had quoted a few—it appears in no good writer of modern English prose before, say, 1880 ; and if it has crept into the writings of one or two reputable authors since that date it has come to them, not from literature, but from journalism. It is a mere slovenliness of hasty expression, invented, beyond all doubt, by the uneducated. This does not necessarily condemn it ; literary language ought always to be rooted in the vernacular. It may be a vulgarism destined, like many another, to become classical ; but in the meantime, as a matter of historic fact, a vulgarism it is. The second objection—that it weakens the phrase—is of course incapable of absolute proof, since there is no mechanical test of the strength of a phrase. One can only beg educated readers to note for themselves whether a split infinitive does not always bring with it a sense of laxity of tissue. As for clearness, it is possible, by the exercise of great ingenuity, to invent a few conjunctures in which some ambiguity as to the application of the adverb may be avoided by splitting the infinitive ; but such difficulties can always be got over by a slight alteration in the turn of the phrase. At any rate, they seem never to have troubled Johnson, or Burke, or Fielding,

or Dickens, or Thackeray, or Carlyle, or Ruskin. One might offer a reward of sixpence for every split infinitive to be found in these writers, and run small risk of finding oneself half a crown the poorer. The earliest instances of the locution known to me are quoted by Professor Earle, in his appendix, from Fanny Burney's diary: "She advised me to certainly write," and "One I do not truly enough honour to cheerfully, in all things serious, obey." Graceful, is it not?¹

On the subject of the misrelated participle, Professor Earle is not nearly explicit enough. This is a vice, it must be owned, which runs through some of our best writers. It is frequent in Lamb and Thackeray. Professor Earle quotes the following example from Johnson:—"Having so lately quitted the tumults of a party and the intrigues of a Court, they still kept his thoughts in agitation." The Professor's own English is not always remarkable for elegance. For instance: "To know the artistic effect of every word in a language so rich as ours in powers of variety, is perhaps never completely attained, and there is not much of it that can be taught by rule." By the way, how can Professor Earle say: "Whenever we meet 'its' in Shakespeare or Hooker or any text of their time, it is generally due to some late editor"? In the first place, the "whenever" contradicts the "generally." In the second place, "its" occurs some five or six times in the First Folio (notably in *The Winter's Tale*), where it cannot be due to a *late* editor.

¹ I quote from the *Westminster Gazette* the following letter signed G. S. L.:—

SIR—I notice that, with some sense of fitness, one of your contemporaries has put on its champion split-infinitivist to write on the champion of all cricketers. What do you think of this? "Let the spectator who witnesses the compilation of a century and sees the countless dangers to the batsman, realise what it means to *on over a hundred occasions* run into three figures!"

SHAKESPEARE

“JULIUS CÆSAR”

MR. TREE'S revival of *Julius Cæsar* is a triumphant success. The play, as I have said any time the last eighteen years, is one of the greatest acting plays in the world ; and it is superbly staged, and more than adequately rendered. Mr. Tree assures me that every one prophesied failure for his venture, and thought him mad to attempt it. “Every one” is a large word ; but there is no doubt that the wiseacres were sceptical and discouraging. Oh, these wiseacres ! Oh, these sapient meddlers and muddlers in theatrical affairs, who go about wrangling over snippets of “exclusive” and generally delusive news, which they serve up in a hotch-potch of comment, compounded, in equal proportions, of servility and stupidity ! *Julius Cæsar*, they said, had never had a long run ; true, for it had never been revived since the long run came in, or under conditions which made a long run possible. *Julius Cæsar* was deficient in female interest ; *Julius Cæsar* had no comic relief ; *Julius Cæsar* was stately and classical and full of long speeches, and the public did not like long speeches and classical stateliness. Thus they tried to make a law of their own lack of dramatic and literary insight, and almost succeeded in persuading Mr. Tree himself that the tragedy was a dull and stodgy anachronism. Hence, no doubt, his manifesto insisting on the “humanity” of the characters ; as though any one who knew chalk from cheese ever questioned it ! All the

more honour to him for braving, not only the difficulty of the three equal parts, but the croakings of the theatrical tipsters, and putting all his strength into an entirely worthy, and in some ways magnificent, revival.

Now "the sad augurs mock their own presage," and all the world knows that *Julius Cæsar* is one of Shakespeare's theatrical masterpieces. This should be apparent enough, to any one with a spark of imagination, on merely reading the play; yet in vaunting its theatrical qualities, I did not rely on imagination alone, but on the very vividest, perhaps, of all my theatrical experiences. I saw the Meiningen performance of *Julius Cæsar*, four or five times; it was incomparably the finest, most impressive, most thrilling thing of its kind I ever saw in a theatre. Frankly—for this is a point of history on which I feel bound to be explicit—the English revival is not so good. It is quite as magnificent, and, for aught I know, it may be even more correct in its archæological detail; but it falls short both in acting and stage-management. We must remember that, when we saw *Julius Cæsar* at Drury Lane, it was not a new production, but was the perfected result of years of patient study and labour, carried out under ideal artistic conditions, and guided and informed by enthusiastic and highly cultivated imagination. It was the hobby of a prince, not the daring experiment of an actor-manager. I draw the comparison, not to depreciate Mr. Tree's most praiseworthy enterprise, but rather *pour encourager les autres*. It is my (perhaps ungrateful) function, with regard to Shakespearean acting, to "hold high the banner of the ideal." This is the branch of histrionics that I love most, have studied most, and (in my own esteem) know most about. As to other forms of acting, my impressions are apt to be vague, my judgments perfunctory. When Mr. Max Beerbohm did me the honour to parody me, his best hit, if I may venture an opinion, was in his last sentence: "I shall speak of the acting next week." But if, when a Shakespearean revival is in question, I "speak of

the acting next week,” it is only in order to have plenty of space, and probably (as in this instance) to see the performance again and study it more closely. I am just old enough to have seen the last of a great school of poetical acting, of what may fairly be called the Shakespearean tradition, since it could be traced back without a break to Burbage and Taylor, whom the poet himself had “instructed.” I am just young enough to look forward with reasonable hope to seeing, before I make my exit, a revival of this lost art, purged of some of its vices and extravagances. That is the end towards which I work; and *Julius Cæsar* at Her Majesty’s, whatever its defects of detail, seems to me a step in the right direction. It is far more living, more poetical, more sonorous than the average Lyceum revival. The sonority does not always come in quite at the proper place or in the proper time; but every here and there the English iambic comes to something like its rights, and that is a great deal to be thankful for. It is quite possible for a performance of *Julius Cæsar* to be a little less excellent than the Meiningen performance and yet one of the most notable productions of our time.

It cannot be said, unfortunately, that the prevailing slowness of the first night has been corrected. Mr. Tree has cut some scenes (Act ii. scenes 3 and 4, and the Soothsayer episode at the beginning of Act iii. scene 1) and has made other small compressions, instead of reducing the monstrously exaggerated pauses. It was scarcely to be expected that he should do much in this way, since he himself is the most inveterate offender. He seeks his effects, not in Shakespeare’s lines, but in the chasms and abysses which he interposes between them. The part of Antony really begins with his entrance into the Senate House after Cæsar’s death. His first words Mr. Tree speaks admirably—

O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?

Mr. Tree does nothing better than this ; but his whole scene with the murderers, though overloaded with self-conscious ingenuities of byplay, is good. His action when left alone with the body of Cæsar, is lacking in dignity, and his speech is far too loud. From "A curse shall light upon the limbs of men" down to "Cry 'Havoc !' and let slip the dogs of war," his tone is not one of reflection, however bitter and bodeful, but of frenzied exhortation. He seems to be already moving the stones of Rome to rise and mutiny, or trying to awaken the corpse at his feet. This is sonority exaggerated and misplaced. As for the famous oration, Mr. Tree's rendering of it produces a considerable effect, and is so far justified ; but it has nothing in common with the thrilling effect of irresistible eloquence which Shakespeare evidently intended, and Herr Barnay attained. There are speakers, and good speakers in their way, whose method consists in a calculated deliberation. They drop their phrases, like pebbles, into a pool of silence, and wait until the ripples caused by one have subsided, before they let slip the next. Mr. Tree's Mark Antony belongs to this school of orators. Every line of his speech—nay, every phrase, for there are certainly more pauses than lines—is thrown into relief against a background of either mute expectancy or inarticulate emotion on the part of the crowd. It is almost as though he cared less for the immediate effect of his words than for the accuracy of the report in the morning papers, and knew that the stenography of the day could not get beyond some fifty words a minute. There are clever turns and ingenious emphases in his delivery, and, what between the speaker and the populace, we are kept thoroughly interested and entertained. But are we moved, excited, carried away? Not for a moment. How different would our emotion be if Mr. Tree would only take Antony at his word and "speak right on," making of the speech a torrent of irony, pathos and invective, an ever-growing tidal wave, instead of a rivulet meandering drop by drop,

as it were, through great expanses of silence. Almost the only point where Antony does *not* pause is after the lines—

Even at the base of Pompey's statua,
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell—

where a considerable pause, and a total change of key, are surely imperative.

Mr. Lewis Waller's fine voice and good enunciation give beautiful effect to many of Brutus's speeches. Nevertheless, he scarcely fills the large outline of Shakespeare's Brutus, the supremely self-satisfied Stoic, whose inflexible idealism overbears the more politic sagacity of Cassius, and ruins their common enterprise. Mr. Waller is too nervous, too tense; his outward manifestations of the struggle that is going on within him are too obvious and commonplace. For instance, while Cassius is enlarging on Cæsar's physical weakness, and asking why he should “so get the start of the majestic world,” Brutus sits with corrugated brows nodding his head in intent acquiescence, as though these commonplaces were new and luminous thoughts to him. They are nothing of the kind. Shakespeare is here illustrating the different characters of the two men—the diversity, not the identity, of their motives. Antony, at the close, says of Brutus—

All the conspirators save only he
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar.

Why, then, should Mr. Waller show Brutus apparently won over by the very speech in which Cassius most clearly unmasks his envy? Brutus should sit lost in reverie, lending only half an ear to the shrewish rhetoric of Cassius, and working towards the same conclusion along his own very different line of thought. In the quarrel-scene, although it is right to contrast the impassivity of Brutus with the vehemence of Cassius, Mr. Waller showed too little feeling at the turning-point—the speech beginning

“Sheath your dagger.” But oh ! what an incomparable scene ! If I were an actor-manager, I should without hesitation give the florid Antony the go-by, and play Cassius, for the sake of that wonderful passage beginning “Of your philosophy you make no use” and ending “O ye immortal gods !” Mr. Franklyn M‘Leay’s Cassius struck me as a very sound and excellent performance. It was a little stiff, perhaps, and seemed a little stagey, in contrast with the too studious reserve of Mr. Waller’s Brutus ; but this contrast, I believe, did Mr. M‘Leay some injustice. He took firm hold of the character and played it vigorously, crisply, discreetly, bringing out to admiration the fiery energy which is the keynote of the man’s nature. And yet—I have a notion that Mr. M‘Leay might do better as Brutus and Mr. Waller as Cassius. Such an exchange of parts was common in the old days ; might not the experiment be tried in this case, sometime before the end of the run ?

MR. GILBERT AND THE IAMBIC

WITH the psychological and the legal problem involved in the case of *Gilbert v. Ledger* I have nothing to do ; but Mr. Gilbert, in the course of his examination, gave utterance to an æsthetic judgment which fills me with respectful astonishment. He "objects to the present fashion of delivering blank verse," and so far I am entirely with him. It is when we come to the reason for this objection that we part company. Mr. Gilbert actually declares that "the metrical, the iambic structure is allowed to dominate the sense, causing the audience to lose the thread of the discourse, and obliging them to give up the speech as a bad job, and wait for the next speech in the hope that they may find better luck with it." If there is a master of sheer metre (as distinct from harmony or sonority) alive in England at this moment, it is undoubtedly Mr. Gilbert, so that what he says on such a point is not to be lightly passed over. Yet the more I consider this dictum, the less can I understand it. To my thinking, it states the exact reverse of the manifest truth—namely, that those actors who do not positively ruin blank verse by omitting, inserting, or misplacing words, systematically deprive it of all metrical quality, by jerking it out in staccato dribblets, separated by interminable pauses, popularly supposed to be full of the subtlest intellectual intentions, but in reality significant, as a rule, only of the speaker's shortness of breath. It is very rarely indeed that one is suffered to

catch more than fragmentary and tantalising hints of the "iambic structure" of a single line, to say nothing of the swell and cadence of a majestic period. Monotony is, indeed, the result—so far Mr. Gilbert is right—but it is not the "iambic structure" that is monotonous (in Shakespeare's lines), but the tricks and dodges by which the actor seeks to evade the rhythmical impetus of the verse, and the torturing, enervating slowness which is thus begotten and fostered. Mr. Gilbert, according to the report before me, seems to deny having said that no English actor "could recite a speech without making it plain that he had learnt it off by heart." If he had said so, the remark, whether true or false in itself, would have pointed in the wrong direction; for the prevailing fashion is to adopt all sorts of devices to make it appear that the words are inspirations of the moment. The attempt is seldom successful, simply because the intention is so obvious; it surely cannot have escaped Mr. Gilbert's notice. Be this as it may, if he accused Sir Henry Irving or Mr. Beerbohm Tree of chanting their lines with slavish attention to the "iambic structure," he certainly did them a crying injustice. Sir Henry Irving can on occasion speak blank verse (Tennyson's, and sometimes even Shakespeare's) with singular charm and distinction; but on the whole he has set a fashion of flat, dragging, and spasmodic elocution which we shall have to shake off again, if Shakespeare, apart from spectacle, is ever to come to his rights on the modern stage. It is when the actor is short-winded that the poet appears long-winded.

"Blank verse has crept so long on a broken wing" (if I may make so free with Tennyson's lines) "That one comes to be grateful at last for a little thing" in the way of buoyancy, impetus, and variety of inflexion. In *Julius Cæsar* at Her Majesty's, which I saw for the fourth time the other day, there is nothing better of its kind than Mr. F. Percival Stevens's rendering of the speech to the citizens in the opening scene. (Mr. Stevens plays

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Metellus Cimber, to whom are transferred the lines which Shakespeare placed in the mouth of Marullus.) In the way of contemplation, on the other hand, it would be hard to overpraise Mr. Lewis Waller's delivery of Brutus's soliloquy in his orchard, "It must be by his death," etc. A little farther on, there is a minute point to which I should like to call Mr. Waller's attention, the more so as it aptly illustrates the divergence between Mr Gilbert's view and mine. In the lines—

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream,—

Mr. Waller removes the "is" from the end of the second line, and prefixes it, so to speak, to the third line. Now to make a pause at "is" would be manifestly absurd—a concession to the "iambic structure" which would merit Mr. Gilbert's severest reprobation. Yet there *is* a way by which a thoroughly accomplished speaker, without making anything that could be called a pause, would indicate to the ear that the "is" belongs to the second line, not to the third, and would thus retain the whole metrical beauty of the passage.

And the first motion, all the interim

is a correct but languid line, while

Is like a phantasma, or a hideous dream

is not a line at all. Shakespeare of set purpose avoided placing the sluggish "interim" at the end of the line. He added the "is" so as to force the actor to hurry lightly over the "e" of "interim," and make a tripping instead of a leaden verse. This intention Mr. Waller defeats, and at the same time makes havoc of the subsequent line.

“MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING”

111
A SUMPTUOUS production, a spirited performance, a great success—that is the bulletin of *Much Ado about Nothing* at the St. James's. The play has always been a popular one, and it has never before been so richly caparisoned, nor (in our time) acted with more gaiety and gusto. It is pretty safe, then, to prophesy for it the success for which Mr. Alexander and his company and staff have worked so skilfully and indefatigably. For my part, if the truth must be told, I cannot abide the play. While every word of *As You Like It* is a pure delight to me, there is scarcely anything in *Much Ado* that gives me real pleasure. The nauseous absurdity of the main plot is a commonplace of criticism; and though there is an abundance of real humour as well as of false wit in the Beatrice-and-Benedick scenes, the incessant strain after smartness very soon gets on my nerves. No other play of Shakespeare's, with the doubtful exception of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is so destitute of poetry. There is scarcely a line in it that either touches the heart or charms the ear. What I, personally, like best in it is what many people find most tedious—the inimitable imbecility of Dogberry and Verges. One of their best scenes is omitted from Mr. Alexander's otherwise excellent text of the play. I waited in vain for “A good old man, sir; he will still be talking.” I could better have spared a better line.

My dislike for the play is partly critical and justifiable,

but largely temperamental and, if you will, capricious. I state it in order to account for the hesitancy of my criticism of the acting. When a thing does not interest you, when you don't care whether it is done or left undone, and would rather prefer the latter alternative, you are scarcely in a position to judge whether it is well done or ill. That *Much Ado* is not ill done I am sure enough; it is another question whether it might not at certain points be better done, especially in the way of stage-management. Why, for instance, do English actors in a masquerade scene resolutely decline to attempt the slightest disguise, preferring to deprive the action of all verisimilitude by holding their masks some eighteen inches away from their faces? This is an immemorial tradition, founded, no doubt, on the actor's pet persuasion that he can produce no effect unless his face be in full view. Perhaps, too, this superstition is reinforced by the belief that, if the masks were honestly worn, the audience would be as much bewildered as the characters are supposed to be, and would fail to distinguish Beatrice from Hero, Benedick from Claudio. As a matter of fact, when the costumes are so elaborately distinctive as they are at the St. James's, no confusion is possible. I am sure that the stage-manager who in this or any other play shall first muster up courage to make a masquerade reasonably plausible, will find his audacity rewarded by a greatly heightened effect. Again, the deliberate disregard of verisimilitude in the two eaves-dropping scenes is, to my thinking, a nonsensical tradition. There is not the least reason for Benedick and Beatrice, each in turn, to station themselves so close to the conspirators that the ticking of their watches (to say nothing of their movements and exclamations) would betray their presence; nor is anything really gained by making the conspirators chuckle so openly over their plot that the veriest numskull could not but see through it half a dozen times over. The scenes, after all, belong to comedy, not to broad farce. There is nothing inherently fantastic or

incredible about them, and it would at least be worth while to try for once the experiment of arranging and acting them credibly. My third criticism is one which I make as a matter of principle, not of personal feeling. The church scene—Claudio's accusation of Hero, and its reception both by Hero herself and the bystanders—is greatly underacted. As a private citizen and human being, I prefer that this should be so. If such a painful and abominable scene must be acted at all, let it be underacted by all means. But in my austerer critical capacity, I am bound to point out that such an episode, in real life, could not possibly pass off so tamely. Claudio would work himself up to a greater pitch of wrath, if only to give colour to his imbecile brutality ; Hero would show much more bewilderment and horror ; and the general sensation, as the law reports phrase it, would be far more acute. I blame no individual actor ; this is one of the scenes in which everything must be tuned to a particular pitch, and there is no scope for individuality. Nor do I blame the stage-management for keeping the pitch low : that is probably the more artistic course. All I say is that the rendering of the passage lacks conviction, and falls short of anything like realism.

DR. BRANDES ON SHAKESPEARE

"OTHERS abide our question—thou art free," wrote Matthew Arnold of Shakespeare, summing up in a single line the orthodox creed of English Shakespearology. We have fortified our souls in a resolute, nay, a defiant, agnosticism. We have made up our minds that nothing can and nothing shall be known about Shakespeare the man; and having, after a struggle, deliberately resigned ourselves to nescience, we are apt to regard as an impertinence any endeavour to arouse us from our "settled, low content." Dr. George Brandes, then, may expect to find his critical study of Shakespeare—a critical biography one might almost call it—hotly resented in several quarters. For Dr. Brandes cannot resign himself to absolute ignorance with regard to the spiritual history of "the monarch of mankind." Confronted with the enigma of Shakespeare's personality, Dr. Brandes is not content to shrug his shoulders and say, "I give it up." Shakespeare, he says, must and does "abide our question," if we put it in the true critical spirit. To the anecdote-monger, the biographical gossip, he has little enough to say, but to the psychologist he is reasonably communicative :—

"Far too long (says Dr. Brandes) it has been the custom to say, 'We know nothing about Shakespeare,' or, 'An octavo page would contain all our knowledge of him.'

Even Swinburne has written of the intangibility of his personality in his works. Such assertions have been carried so far that a wretched group of *dilettanti* has been bold enough, in Europe and America, to deny William Shakespeare the right to his own life-work, to give to another the honour due to his genius, and to bespatter him and his invulnerable name with an insane abuse which has re-echoed through every land. . . . It is the author's opinion that, given the possession of some forty important works by any man, it is entirely our own fault if we know nothing whatever about him. The poet has incorporated his whole individuality in these writings, and there, if we can read aright, we shall find him."

This, in the eyes of many, is a damnable heresy; but Dr. Brandes is pretty well inured to the position of a heresiarch.

It must not be supposed, however, that he has any very new or subversive theory to propound. He does not profess to have made original researches or to have unearthed new facts. He has discovered no cypher and reads no esoteric meaning or message into the poet's work. The drift of his thought—as of all sane Shakespearology—is to substitute a natural for a miraculous Shakespeare. For the impersonality theory is essentially a miraculous one. It regards Shakespeare as a sort of mechanical mouthpiece, through which the Spirit of Drama chose to address the world; or, say, a "trance medium" speaking by literal, not merely figurative, inspiration. This is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from a doctrine which forbids us to seek in Shakespeare's works for any record or indication of his personal opinions, emotions, or experiences. The tacit implication is that the most vivid interpreter of emotion the world has ever seen was himself a man of highly unemotional temperament, a hard-headed, pushing business man, who happened to have a peculiar gift for making puppets dance, and used it

diligently in order to fill his pockets and found a family. All that we know of artistic psychology contradicts this assumption, and forces us to substitute "miraculous" for "peculiar" in describing the postulated "gift." Genius is not the faculty of making bricks without straw, but of utilising superbly the straws provided by observation and experience. The Elizabethan Drama, be it observed, is not, like the "well-made play" of the modern French stage, an art-form which on principle excludes everything but plot, situation, and such a modicum of character as the plot absolutely necessitates. On the contrary, it is largely, one might almost say limitlessly, discursive. It is crammed with reflective and didactic matter. It habitually combines the essay, the invective, the undramatised character-study, the satirical onslaught, general or personal, the political or topical allusion, with the strictly dramatic elements of plot, situation, and character. In other words, it is not merely dramatic, but lyrical, rhetorical, and philosophical in the highest degree. Shakespeare, moreover, availed himself to the full of all the extra-dramatic opportunities offered by the form in which he worked. Is it reasonable, then, to argue that none of the lineaments of Shakespeare the man can by any possibility be discerned in the works of Shakespeare the dramatist—to say nothing of Shakespeare the sonneteer? We may surely reply, with Dr. Brandes, that it is the height of unreason. The prevalence of this view is, I think, due to two obscure causes: first, the instinct which prompts us to make Shakespeare a miracle at all hazards; second, a deep-seated resentment of the scantiness of external data as to the poet's life and character. Since Fate has played us the scurvy trick of wiping out almost all personal records, we petulantly abjure the quest for knowledge, and seek comfort in dogmatic nescience.

Even those who most deprecate Dr. Brandes's method, and who find most to criticise in the details of his work, can scarcely fail to acknowledge and admire the extra-

ordinary grasp of mind he has shown, and his mastery of the gigantic literature of his subject. It must be remembered that every year that passes makes a large addition, if not to the difficulties, at any rate to the necessary labours, of the Shakespeare student. The task of such critics as Ulrici and Gervinus was mere child's play in comparison with that which confronted Dr. Brandes. A whole library of formal commentators has to be read, lest here and there a gleam of light should lurk amid much darkening of counsel; and the far more valuable but scarcely less voluminous records of textual criticism, and investigations of sources, allusions, and metres, have to be mastered and brought to bear. Dr. Brandes has shrunk from no labour. He has sifted, one may venture to say, the whole mass of Shakespeare criticism, English, American, German, French, historical, æsthetic, ethical, chronological, textual, metrical, and even Baconian. Whatever else its value, then, his book is a veritable encyclopædia of Shakespearcan information. It is a work of well-nourished scholarship if ever there was one. In mere bulk it ranks among the fullest treatments of the subject; and it is not distended by windy ethical and æsthetic sermonisings, but is at all points real and vital, full of definite exposition and solid argument. It may be thought that Dr. Brandes gives too much space to historical digressions, notably to the history of Essex and Southampton, which opens the second book, and to the picture of crime and corruption at the Court of James I. which serves as frontispiece to the third book. But these disquisitions are not, in his mind, digressions at all. He holds that the tragical result of the Essex conspiracy contributed to the darkening of Shakespeare's mood, which undoubtedly synchronised with it, and that the hideous corruption of the Court of James helped to plunge him into that abyss of misogyny and misanthropy which he sounded in *Troilus* and *Timon*. We may or may not accept the theory that political and social phenomena exercised a distinct influence on Shake-

speare's mental history ; but we cannot fairly blame Dr. Brandes for submitting his evidence in detail to a public which, be it remembered, is not primarily English, but European.

Dr. Brandes accepts in the main the received chronology, and the division of Shakespeare's career into four or five periods, upon which the best English critics are practically agreed. We have first the period of youthful experiment, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* for its culminating points ; then the period of serene mastery, extending (roughly speaking) from *Henry IV.* to *Twelfth Night* ; then the period of tragic gloom, extending from *Julius Cæsar* to *Antony and Cleopatra* ; then the aforesaid plunge into misogyny and misanthropy ; and finally the Indian Summer of restored serenity, extending from *Pericles* to *The Tempest*. Trivialities apart, Dr. Brandes does not seriously differ from Professor Dowden (to name one representative critic) in his mapping out of Shakespeare's life. His originality lies (for good or ill, as the case may be) in his rebellion against the timorousness which preserves throughout an attitude of suspended judgment, and will not accept and build upon anything short of legal proof. In Dr. Brandes's view, some probabilities are so strong as to amount to practical certainties, and to justify us in making them the bases of further reasoning and generalisation. A catena of probabilities or improbabilities may be as convincing, he thinks, as a piece of direct evidence ; and having once attained a positive or negative conviction on any given point, he does not hesitate to co-ordinate that conviction with others and build further upon the foundation thus secured. He holds, in short, that valuable and trustworthy results are to be obtained from the careful sifting of evidence, and he sets about the task with a diligence that is beyond praise, and in as sane a critical spirit as ever was brought to bear upon this vast and complex problem. There is a good deal of evidence yet to be brought to light, no doubt, and

it will all be re-sifted many a time and oft before a final residuum is reached that shall command universal acceptance. The end is not yet, and Dr. Brandes, I am sure, would be the last to claim finality for his work. But I am much mistaken if he be not recognised by scholars of the future as one of the foremost among those who have striven in the right direction, and have substantially advanced the frontier line of knowledge.

On the whole, Dr. Brandes gives much more weight to English than to German criticism. A psychologist by taste and training, he is never led astray by German ethical and political cobweb-spinning. Sometimes, however, he gives too much attention (in my judgment) to the fantasies of German students with regard to historic parallels which may have been present to Shakespeare's mind in the composition of this or that tragedy. For instance, I find it impossible to conceive that any recollection of the Leicester-Essex scandal, or of the Darnley-Bothwell imbroglio, had the remotest influence upon the composition of *Hamlet*. Dr. Brandes, it is true, in no way builds upon these coincidences. He says :—

“Although there is in all this no lack of parallels to Hamlet's circumstances, it is, of course, as ridiculous to take James as to take Essex for the actual model of Hamlet. Nothing could at that time have been stupider or more tactless than to remind the heir-presumptive to the throne, or the new King, of the deplorable circumstances of his early history. This does not exclude the supposition, however, that contemporary history supplied Shakespeare with certain outward elements, which, in the moment of conception, contributed to the picture bodied forth by the creative energy of his genius.”

The supposition, indeed, cannot be entirely excluded, but it is so far-fetched as to be negligible. On the other hand, Dr. Brandes deals in a masterly and convincing

fashion with the theory which traces a great deal of the philosophy of *Hamlet* to the influence of Giordano Bruno. The chapter on Bruno and Montaigne is one of the ablest in the book. As regards the Sonnets, Dr. Brandes utterly rejects the Southampton theory, and accepts as fairly convincing not only the Pembroke hypothesis, but Mr. Tyler's identification of the Dark Lady with Mistress Mary Fitton. He even adopts the extravagant suggestion that the puppet-show scene in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* may be an allusion to the relations of Shakespeare and Pembroke with Mrs. Fitton ; though, if we must find personal satire in it, Aubrey's anecdote of Beaumont and Fletcher, quoted by Dr. Brandes himself (vol. ii. p. 298), would afford an infinitely more probable peg on which to hang the allusion.

Dr. Brandes's intense admiration for Shakespeare is rendered all the more telling by the complete independence of his attitude. He is no fanatic, no indiscriminating adorer. Let me quote, as an example of his criticism in the narrower sense of the word, a passage from his chapter on *Julius Cæsar*, in which he considers and dismisses the reasons which have been alleged for Shakespeare's belittling of the character of Cæsar :—

“Shakespeare dared not (says Gervinus) arouse too great interest in Cæsar ; he had to throw into relief everything about him that could account for the conspiracy ; and, moreover, he had Plutarch's distinct statement that Cæsar's character had greatly deteriorated shortly before his death. Hudson practically agrees with this, holding that Shakespeare wished to present Cæsar as he appeared in the eyes of the conspirators, so that “they too might have fair and equal judgment at our hands” ; admitting, for the rest, that “Cæsar was literally too great to be seen by them,” and that “Cæsar is far from being himself in these scenes ; hardly one of the speeches put in his mouth can be regarded as historically characteristic.”

Thus Hudson arrives at the astonishing result that "there is an undertone of irony at work in the ordering and tempering of this composition," explaining that, "when such a shallow idealist as Brutus is made to overtop and outshine the greatest practical genius the world ever saw," we are bound to assume that the intention is ironical.

"This is the emptiest cobweb-spinning. There is no trace of irony in the representation of Brutus. Nor can we fall back upon the argument that Cæsar, after his death, becomes the chief personage of the drama, and as a corpse, as a memory, as a spirit, strikes down his murderers. How can so small a man cast so great a shadow! Shakespeare, of course, intended to show Cæsar as triumphing after his death. He has changed Brutus's evil genius, which appears to him in the camp and at Philippi, into Cæsar's ghost; but this ghost is not sufficient to rehabilitate Cæsar in our estimation.

"Nor is it true that Cæsar's greatness would have impaired the unity of the piece. Its poetic value, on the contrary, suffers from his pettiness. The play might have been immeasurably richer and deeper than it is, had Shakespeare been inspired by a feeling of Cæsar's greatness.

"Elsewhere in Shakespeare one marvels at what he has made out of poor and meagre material. Here, history was so enormously rich, that his poetry has become poor and meagre in comparison with it."

What I chiefly miss in Dr. Brandes's work is a final chapter giving a synopsis of results, and enabling the reader to test in close succession the different chains of probability on which the critic's conclusions depend. To take one example among many: Most people would instinctively regard it as improbable that domestic events taking place in distant Stratford should determine Shakespeare's choice of subjects, and that he should give direct and immediate expression to his private sorrows through

the mouths of his dramatic characters. But if we see good reason to believe that the death of his son Hamnet immediately preceded the composition of *King John*, with the lamentations of Constance for her Arthur, that the death of his father immediately preceded the composition of *Hamlet*, and that the death of his mother immediately preceded the composition of *Coriolanus*, we could scarcely help finding a significance in the series of three coincidences, which it would be absurd to attach to any single one of them. I have not gone closely into the chronological evidence in these three cases. It satisfies Dr. Brandes, and that is so much in its favour. But he might have set the matter at rest by bringing the three coincidences together, and definitely summing up the probabilities. Such a conspectus of results, however, would very likely have taken up too much space. Why should not Dr. Brandes make a separate book of it, now that he has all his material ready to hand?

“MACBETH”

“It is well known,” so I read the other day in a German paper, “that to the Meiningen Company belongs the credit of having taught England to understand her greatest dramatic poet. From the time of their visit to London dates the successful introduction of Shakespeare into the repertory of the English stage.” To English readers, the absurdity of this statement needs no demonstration. No one was more deeply impressed than I by the Meiningen performance of *Julius Cæsar*; no one has more persistently reminded English managers of its merits, and urged them to realise what a treasure lay ready to their hand in this world-historic tragedy, which happened to be at the same time the most effective of acting plays. Thus it is with no disposition to make light of the Meiningen Company in itself, that I declare its influence upon the English stage to have been practically nil. The brief period during which “Shakespeare spelt ruin and Byron bankruptcy” (to a manager whose artistic competence may be estimated from his bracketing of the two names) was over long before the Meiningers set foot in England. Several of the most successful of the Lyceum revivals preceded their appearance at Drury Lane. The movement which began with the Lyceum *Hamlet* of 1874, went on absolutely unaffected by the Meiningen performances of seven years later, which were justly praised by a few critics, but practically ignored both by the public and the managers. They did not

“teach us to understand Shakespeare”; they did not even teach us to understand *Julius Cæsar*; for when, seventeen years later, Mr. Beerbohm Tree revived the play, it was still in the teeth of warnings from all quarters that so “undramatic” a tragedy could not be made effective on the stage. Those of us who, remembering the Meiningen performance, knew the absurdity of this prognostic, were in a vanishing minority. It is true that on the actual revival at Her Majesty’s the memory, or the rumour, of the “Meiningen crowd” had a determining influence. It encouraged Mr. Tree to select the part of Antony, for the sake of the thrilling effect to be produced by means of a skilful manipulation of the populace in the Forum Scene. Thus the seed sown at Drury Lane in 1881 bore fruit in a great popular success at Her Majesty’s in 1898. During all the intervening years, it had lain dormant and well-nigh forgotten.

On the whole, we must take with a considerable discount the German claim to a superior comprehension and cultivation of Shakespeare, whether on the stage or off. It is true that in each of the great German cities some ten or twelve plays of Shakespeare may be seen in the course of an average season, as against three or four in London. ’Tis true, ’tis pity; and it is a state of things which I, for one, am most anxious to see remedied by the establishment of a Repertory Theatre. All German theatres of any repute are Repertory Theatres; the long run is confined to third-rate houses devoted to operetta and farce. That is why the Germans can keep Shakespeare, as a whole, alive on the stage, while we must content ourselves with over-decorated revivals of the comparatively few plays which can reasonably be expected to run a hundred nights at a time. It is true, moreover, that German actors, having more practice in poetical drama, know how to use their voices better than our actors, and do not shirk or scamp the rhetorical effects designed by the poet. But against these advantages there are a good many drawbacks to be set off. Recent

experience in Germany has done a good deal to console me for being, after all, Shakespeare's countryman. I did not see the best German actors in their best Shakespearean parts ; but what I did see, at the leading theatres of Berlin, Vienna, and Munich, convinced me that a great deal of very inferior work passes muster with the German public as acceptable, if not excellent. I cannot at present go into detail. It is time, indeed, that I should come to the point of this long exordium, and say that I saw no Shakespearean performance in Germany which could bear comparison, as a whole, with the revival of *Macbeth* at the Lyceum. It was far enough from perfection, but it was not only more beautiful, but more skilful and sympathetic, than anything I had seen in the Fatherland.

Let me own, however, that the joy of once more hearing Shakespeare in his own tongue would have reconciled me to a far worse performance. The Germans may know everything else about Shakespeare—they cannot feel as we do the exquisiteness of his diction. They are sometimes content to play him in high-handed adaptations or paraphrases, by Dingelstedt and others ; but even the classic translation by Schlegel and Tieck, admirable as it is, can but occasionally and remotely suggest the thrilling verbal beauty of which Shakespeare possessed the secret. No play is more thickly studded than *Macbeth* with gems of perfect utterance ; and it was a pleasure indeed to hear the lines flow with their native sonorities. The contrast between Shakespeare in English and Shakespeare in German gave me a new realisation of the value of the Latin element in our tongue. It lubricates the mechanism of speech. I felt a positive sensation of relief in passing from Schlegel to Shakespeare. It was as though a great singer had suddenly recovered his voice after an attack of hoarseness.

Mr. Forbes Robertson's *Macbeth* is an interesting rather than a great or commanding performance. It is free from the vices of style which make so much modern Shakespearean acting a weariness of the flesh ; but it has

no strong dramatic impetus, to say nothing of tragic greatness. Mr. Robertson's taste and talent alike run in the direction of pure contemplation. His Hamlet was excellent in the main, because Hamlet is in the main a contemplative character. Where he passes from contemplation to action, or even intense and vehement feeling, Mr. Robertson at once fell short. Macbeth, too, is in some measure a contemplative character, and Mr. Robertson's rendering of the merely reflective passages of the part was exceedingly good. But the proportion of contemplation to actual doing and suffering is much greater in Hamlet than in Macbeth; wherefore Mr. Robertson's Macbeth fell further short of the ideal than did his Hamlet. It is hard to tell what prevents him from giving life to his portrayal of terror, fury, and despair—whether it be lack of imagination or of physical force and mobility. I incline to the former supposition—it seems to me that Mr. Robertson does not imagine himself into the character vividly and intimately. He does not let it take hold on him; and the consequence is that he does not take hold on us. He is never positively bad—never ridiculous or extravagant. He simply fails to give adequate expression to the emotions underlying the words he is uttering. There is no pulsation, no thrill, no spontaneous impulse in his acting; it seems all to be measured and weighed. We study it with interest and without discomfort (and that is no small matter in these days); but it never grips us and carries us away. There is so much that is good in Mr. Robertson's performance, however, that one cannot but think it may yet become very much better. It is impossible that an actor should do himself full justice in a great part, when he has all the fatigues and cares of management on his shoulders as well. I hope to see Mr. Robertson's performance again when the worries inseparable from an elaborate production are over, and his attention is no longer distracted by mechanical details. It is quite possible that his imagination may one day take fire,

so to speak, and light up the part afresh for him, revealing all sorts of hitherto unsuspected openings for variety and intensity of expression.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell moves gracefully and adroitly through the part of Lady Macbeth, reciting the lines with considerable intelligence, but scarcely attempting, in any real sense, to act the character, to portray the fierce energy and indomitable will of Shakespeare's creation. Lady Macbeth, indeed, is so obviously outside her natural range of parts, that, paradoxical as it may seem, we feel the shortcomings of this performance much less than those of her Ophelia. We cannot blame her for not straining after the impossible ; we follow her own lead in philosophically accepting the limitations of her talent, and we are grateful for the beauty which neither passion nor anguish is suffered to disturb.

REMINISCENT CRITICISM

IMMEDIATELY after paying my promised second visit to *Macbeth* at the Lyceum, I came across an article in which the sprightly "Max" of the *Saturday Review* argues that we see far too much of Shakespeare's more popular plays, and suggests a "close time" for these overworked classics. *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, and *Macbeth*, he says, will never "live again" unless "all managers—metropolitan, suburban, and provincial—enter into a solemn compact not to revive them for a period of (say) thirty years." To take this for Mr. Beerbohm's serious opinion is to suppose him capable of holding a serious opinion—an injustice which he would righteously resent. Mr. Beerbohm is, by habit and repute, a solemn-faced jester, and his opinions, like his quotations from Aubrey, Pepys, etc., are mere mystifications. As a Scotchman, I am a little impatient of this style of humour. The surgical operation has yet to be performed which shall enable me to see the cleverness of Mr. Beerbohm's imaginary elucidation of the line "Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth," by reference to a fictitious *Booke of Antient Heraldrie and the Devices*. The late John Payne Collier was an adept at jokes of this sort, but somehow they have not, in the long run, enhanced the gaiety of nations. When Mr. Beerbohm, however, confines himself to fabricating, not authorities, but opinions, there is generally a substratum of sense under his nonsense which renders it worth attention. His argument with reference to Shake-

Shakespeare's more popular plays is ingenious and even specious. I think it is mistaken ; I think we ought to see *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, not seldomer, but oftener than we do ; so I shall pretend (with all apologies) to take Mr. Beerbohm seriously, and show where, in my judgment, he goes astray.

"When a play has become a classic in drama," he says, "it ceases to be a play." It becomes a mere pretext for comparative criticism, which Mr. Beerbohm parodies amusingly enough. "The play is dead. The stage is crowded with ghosts. Every head in the auditorium is a heavy casket of reminiscence. Play they never so wisely, the players cannot lay those circumambient ghosts nor charm those well-packed caskets to emptiness." To this argument there are two answers : it is based on a false observation and on a false assumption. It is not true that "Every head in the auditorium is a heavy casket of reminiscence"—it is the reverse of the essential truth. The reason why good acting finds no encouragement in England, and bad acting no check (I am speaking, remember, of Shakespearean performances), is that not one in five hundred of any given audience comes to the theatre with the vaguest idea, or ideal, as to how a play or a part should be acted. They come to see this or that favourite actor or actress, and are prepared, nay, determined to applaud, however feeble or flat or wrong-headed or incompetent may be the performance offered them. One may safely say, I think, that the majority of any but a first-night audience, even at *Hamlet* (and much more certainly at *Macbeth*), have never seen the play before, and are innocent of "reminiscences." But I do not insist on this estimate, which is naturally incapable of verification. What I do insist on is the fact, which Mr. Beerbohm can verify for himself with very little trouble, that even of those who have seen a play before, and perhaps seen it several times, practically no one retains any clear recollection of a single detail of conception or execution, intonation, emphasis, or business. Thus Mr. Beerbohm's representation of the

heads of an audience (even of a first-night audience) as so many "heavy caskets of reminiscence" is absolutely imaginary. The memory for details of acting is the rarest of faculties. I am almost devoid of it myself; I have known only two or three people in the course of my life (and these professed students and enthusiasts) who possessed it in any marked degree. The immense majority of an audience, after a month has passed, retains nothing but a vague general impression of even the vividest performance. They know whether, as a whole, it pleased or displeased them; but if you ask them why, they will tell you that they like or dislike the general style and personality of the actor, or that they thought him physically fitted or unfitted to the part—they will be unable to cite a single individual point which they approved or disapproved. Sometimes, where their sense of humour has been tickled, they will continue for years to chuckle over, and perhaps burlesque, some particular passage in which an actor made himself supremely ridiculous; but what he did well, or but moderately ill, fades like an "unfixed" photograph, and leaves only a featureless blur on their memory. For my own part, though I blush, as a critic, for the defects of my memory, I cannot suppose it weaker than that of the average non-professional playgoer; yet I can assure Mr. Beerbohm that when I saw *Macbeth* a second time, I found I had forgotten almost all the details of the first performance, not three weeks earlier. As for comparing Mr. Robertson with Sir Henry Irving, or Mrs. Campbell with Miss Ellen Terry, I could as easily compare them with John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. Of course I know Sir Henry Irving's and Miss Ellen Terry's methods, and I remember generally how these methods, as applied to *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, affected me; but I search my memory in vain for a single detail of elocution or of action. With some aid from Mr. Sargent, I remember the picture presented by Miss Terry in her wonderful green gown; but as to her performance—well, Mrs.

Siddons's *Lady Macbeth* stands much more vividly before my mind's eye. Is Mr. Beerbohm's own head, I wonder, "a heavy casket of reminiscence"? How often has he seen *Macbeth*? And of the *Macbeths* he has seen, how many does he remember clearly enough to compare them point by point, or even at half a dozen crucial points, with Mr. Forbes Robertson? If his experience and memory enable him to make any such comparison, he stands almost alone among theatrical journalists; for, as a matter of fact, the "comparative criticism" which he denounces as "dreary," is quite beyond the power of most critics, and is very rarely practised. If a prize were offered for a detailed comparison of Mr. Forbes Robertson's rendering of (say) the dagger soliloquy with Sir Henry Irving's and Salvini's, I very much fear it would go a-begging.

So much for the false observation; now for the false assumption. It is that suspense and surprise are essential to dramatic effect, or, in more general terms, to theatrical enjoyment—that when we know precisely what is coming in a play, it ceases to affect us as drama. This is a very common assumption, to which the greatest critics, from Aristotle downwards, have given a certain countenance; but it will not bear examination. A Greek tragedy was, as a rule, performed only once, or if it was repeated it was before a totally new audience. Therefore Aristotle naturally discussed the sort of plot and the manner of treatment best suited for securing success with what we should call a "first-night house"—an audience before whom a play unfolds itself for the first time. Here curiosity and suspense inevitably arise, and are highly important factors, no doubt, in the sum total of dramatic effect. But they are not indispensable factors; if they were, no one would ever go to see a play a second time; whereas it is, I take it, an almost universal experience that our keenest theatrical enjoyments have come to us in seeing plays with which we were perfectly familiar, on the stage and off. Yet our theorists go on (following Aristotle, at however

great a distance) theorising and laying down laws in view of an abstract first-night audience which approaches a play with its mind a blank as to the characters to be presented and the story to be told. It is the cult of this abstract audience which has to a great extent vitiated and trivialised the modern drama. By attaching too great importance to effects of curiosity and suspense, men came to produce plays which were, indeed, tedious and extinct the moment our first curiosity was allayed. But the great play—nay, the merely good play—is precisely that which continues to interest and move us when we know the story by heart. I do not mean that the canons of dramatic story-telling are altogether idle. In the first place, every play must pass through the ordeal of novelty; it must begin its career by interesting a series of audiences which know nothing, or next to nothing, about it. In the second place, the skilful telling of a story is in itself an admirable thing, and a source of keen artistic enjoyment, even when we are perfectly familiar with the story told. But to talk as though ignorance, or forgetfulness, of the course of a story were essential to our enjoyment of it on the stage, is to contradict the daily, or nightly, experience of myriads of people all the world over. For Mr. Beerbohm will scarcely argue, I suppose, that it is sheer hypocrisy or gregarious stupidity that keeps *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, *Phèdre* and *Le Misanthrope*, *Faust* and *Wilhelm Tell*, alive upon the European and American stage.

The true principle of the thing is surely manifest. A great play is like a great piece of music: we can hear it again and again with ever new realisation of its subtle beauties, its complex harmonies, and with unfailing interest in the merits and demerits of each particular rendering. It is true that in music (I speak under correction) a perfect, or nearly perfect, performance is oftener attainable than in drama; but in the drama, as in music, though perfect execution may give the highest pleasure, imperfect execution too, within limits, has a very real attraction for us.

There is enjoyment in intelligent criticism as well as in unmixed admiration ; and this is precisely the enjoyment which, for lack of any reasonable standard, founded either on reminiscence or reflection, the vast majority of our modern audiences has to do without. If people saw these great plays oftener, they would enjoy them more. To put the thing roughly, there are two main forms of interest in drama : plot-interest, dependent on novelty, and detail-interest, dependent on familiarity. The modern public, as a whole, has lost the one form of interest in Shakespeare's plays, without having acquired the other. Plot-interest—the interest of the unknown and the unforeseen—they cannot possibly have for any educated audience. Not even Mr. Beerbohm's thirty years' "close time" could make them new again—not though the printed volumes of Shakespeare were likewise placed under embargo for the space of a generation. The legends of Hamlet, of Macbeth, of Romeo, have sunk deep into the world's consciousness. Literature is permeated with them. It would need a thirty years' return to sheer unlettered barbarism to purge them from the world's memory, and restore to the masterpieces in which they are enshrined the interest of novelty—the interest which we feel when the curtain rises on a new play by Mr. Pinero or Mr. Jones. And it is as undesirable as it is impossible to recapture this form of interest. What we really want is that audiences should feel an intelligent pleasure in the manifold and marvellous spiritual achievement represented by each of these plays, and a critical understanding of individual excellences and defects of representation. Of course the hundred-night public—the hundred thousand spectators implied in a hundred-night run—is, for the present, at any rate, incapable of this delicacy of appreciation. But if we had a theatre where (as at the leading German theatres) our great stage-classics were frequently passed in review, instead of being sumptuously revived at intervals of from five to fifty years, they would rapidly educate their smaller but still numerous

and commercially adequate public, and familiarity would breed, not boredom, but subtler understanding and livelier pleasure. As it is, the public has, so to speak, no ear for Shakespearean acting. It accepts everything that is presented by actors of reputation with the same indiscriminating, mechanical applause. For twenty years I have attended (with very few exceptions) every Shakespearean first-night at the leading West End theatres, and I can remember only one break in the dead level of "enthusiastic ovations." Now it is not for a moment conceivable that all these forty or fifty performances were equally good. If applause bore any relation to merit, it would certainly, in these twenty years, have had occasion to run the whole gamut between frigidity and fervour. But no! there is a stated measure of enthusiasm awaiting every actor-manager who chooses to present himself in a Shakespearean part; and this lack of discrimination on the part of the first-night public is due, not, assuredly, to over-familiarity with the plays presented, but to total ignorance of the ideals and possibilities of this particular branch of art. All these productions, indeed, have not been equally successful, for no amount of first-night "enthusiasm" will make the great public flock to an entertainment which is inherently and irretrievably dull. But the fact remains that, owing to the insensate conditions of the modern theatre, there is no audience (and practically no criticism) which can be trusted to discriminate between good work and bad, to crown excellence and reject incompetence.

A recent *feuilleton* by Francisque Sarcey offers an excellent example of that "comparative criticism" which I have tried to defend against Mr. Max Beerbohm's scorn. In Casimir Delavigne's *Louis XI.*, recently revived at the Français, there occurs a prayer, spoken by Louis, which ends with the lines—

Que votre volonté soit faite,
Dieu clément—et la mienne aussi !

"This last phrase," writes Sarcey, "might be spoken

in several different ways. One might utter it gravely, solemnly, like a king who feels himself second only to God, and who claims for himself the privileges and responsibilities of omnipotence. I do not think that this is the meaning which the author attached to the phrase, and I am convinced that such a reading would be ineffective. Geffroy, whom I remember very distinctly, after pronouncing the sacramental words, '*Que votre volonté soit faite,*' uttered rapidly the '*et la mienne aussi*' in a voice which was neither too high nor too low, and in which one caught an undertone of mocking menace. He was a king who said to God: 'Everything is in thy hand, no doubt; but I too am a power in my way.' Silvain seems to me to seek a purely comic effect of contrast. He attains it, for a smile runs round the house. But is that, I wonder, what the poet intended?" Now, I submit that even such a minute point as this is really interesting to any one who cares for refinements of interpretation in acting; and any one who does not care for them ought to let criticism alone. Further, I hold that in discussing this point Sarcey was performing one of the most indisputably useful functions of criticism; and that such discussions, while stimulating to the actor and suggestive to the playgoer, are not necessarily "dreary" even to the general reader, if he has any sense for the finesses, I will not say of theatrical, but simply of literary art. There is scarcely a scene or a speech in Shakespeare that does not present some such problem, often, of course, of much greater interest and importance. Until we have actors who consider such points, and critics who discuss them, whether by the "comparative" method or by the light of pure reason, we cannot have a worthy school of Shakespearean acting. Were not Macklin and his daughter estranged for years because they could not agree as to the right emphasis for the phrase "'Tis mightiest in the mightiest"? They might have kept their tempers; but the quarrel at least proves that they knew and loved their business.

MR. LEE'S LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE

IN writing the life of Shakespeare for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Mr. Sidney Lee necessarily amassed a quantity of material which he had to condense (and did condense admirably) for the purposes of that publication. He has now subjected the same material to the opposite process ; he has expanded and supplemented it, so as to furnish, in a volume of some 450 pages, a compendium of all that is known concerning the life of Shakespeare. The work is excellently done. The earliest traditions are weighed and sifted, along with the most recent discoveries of antiquarian ardour ; and the results are marshalled clearly, concisely, and judiciously. Diligence, accuracy, and exhaustive knowledge are manifest on every page ; while the manner of presentation, without pretending to any great literary charm, is unaffected and agreeable. Except in one particular section, Mr. Lee's book is by far the best and completest short life of Shakespeare that we possess. It must henceforth find a place in even the most modest Shakespearean library.

So far as scholarship will carry him, Mr. Lee proceeds almost unerringly ; where criticism, as distinct from scholarship, is called for, he sometimes goes far astray. He has set himself gallantly to solve the problem of the Sonnets, and has devoted a great deal of conscientious and, in itself,

most praiseworthy labour to making confusion worse confounded. Even the tone he adopts is unfortunate. Merc dogmatism will avail him nothing. What is the use of saying, "The problem presented by the patron is simple," when the solution of it which Mr. Lee propounds is utterly discredited by four of the leading scholars of the day, Professor Dowden, Mr. George Wyndham, Mr. Tyler, and Dr. Brandes, and was rejected, only a few years ago, by Mr. Lee himself? It is possible, of course, that Mr. Lee may have changed his mind for the better; but what purpose is served by calling a problem "simple" on which he is at variance with his earlier self, and with almost all his fellow-students? The phrase has a ring of arrogance which I am sure Mr. Lee does not intend; I prefer to think it a slip in literary art, an attempt to carry conviction by dint of mere over-emphasis. There is a similar failure of tact in the assertion that the "Mr. W. H." of the dedication to the Sonnets "is best identified with a stationer's assistant, William Hall." Such a phrase, occurring in a text-book like Mr. Lee's, would naturally convey to the unsuspecting reader that the question had been fully thrashed out, and that the preponderance of expert opinion was clearly in favour of this identification. Nothing could be further from the fact. The suggestion was first made by Mr. Charles Edmonds in 1873, and from that day to this it has found, so far as I am aware, no single adherent save, in the fulness of time, Mr. Sidney Lee. One cannot but regret to find a writer of Mr. Lee's high deserts falling into the bad habit of self-destructive dogmatism which has vitiated the work of so many earlier scholars.

Coming forward as a champion of the theory which discovers in the "lovely boy" of Shakespeare's Sonnets Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, Mr. Lee is bound to minimise the autobiographical value of the Sonnets, and to throw into prominence the conventional element in them. To this end he sets about a close

investigation of the epidemic of sonneteering that raged in England during the last ten years of the sixteenth century. The diligence with which he has studied not only the English sonneteers, but their French and Italian models, cannot be over-praised. I wish he would give us a monograph on "The Sonnet in Europe, from Petrarch to Shakespeare." But before he does so he ought to go into the psychology of amatory verse, and learn to distinguish between deliberate imitation and resemblances arising from the universal identity of the symptoms that mark the divine disease. Take, for instance, the following passage :—

"The thoughts and words of the sonnets of Daniel, Drayton, Watson, Barnabe Barnes, Constable, and Sidney were assimilated by Shakespeare in his poems as consciously and with as little compunction as the plays and novels of his contemporaries in his dramatic work. . . . Adapted or imitated conceits are scattered over the whole of Shakespeare's collection. They are usually manipulated with consummate skill, but Shakespeare's indebtedness is not thereby obscured."

This remark indicates a curious inexpertness in the workings of the poetic, and especially the amorous, fancy. Every poet-lover rediscovers for himself conceits, analogies, images of all sorts, that have been the commonplaces of poetry ever since Petrarch—nay, since the Greek Anthology. He does not go to Italian, French, or Elizabethan sonneteers to find them; they come to him unbidden. Nowadays, if he have the slightest tincture of letters, he stifles and suppresses them, because he knows that these things have been felt by millions before him, and sung by hundreds, probably better than he can hope to sing them. If he be an uneducated person, he strings his conceits in whatever form of lyric verse happens to be for the moment in fashion, and they adorn the Poets' Corner of country newspapers, or are published "on commission" and ignored

by the world. But in Shakespeare's time the world had not yet got over the sense of pleased surprise on recognising these resemblances. The conceits of the sonneteers were strictly analogous to the puns of the playwrights—diseases incident to the youth of literature. No doubt direct translation, imitation, and plagiarism went on in abundance; but these things must be established by unmistakable sequences of verbal coincidence, not by mere similarity of idea, where the idea, instead of being hard to find, is hard to avoid. When Mr. Samuel Weller addressed his celebrated declaration to "Mary, Housemaid, at Mr. Nupkins's, Mayor's, Ipswich," he said, "The first and only time I see you, your likeness was took on my hart in much quicker time and brighter colors than ever a likeness was took by the profeel machine." "I'm afeerd that werges on the poetical, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, senior; and though Sam replied, "No, it don't," his parent's critical instinct was undoubtedly in the right. It was an utterance of the spontaneous, irrepressible poetry of love. Not even Mr. Lee, I fancy, will find in it a proof that Sam had been studying the Sonnets and adapting to his own use the lines:—

Mine eye hath play'd the painter, and hath stel'd
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart.

If Sam Weller, then—or let us say Charles Dickens on his behalf—was capable of conceiving this idea unprompted and unaided, why should we conclude that Shakespeare must have borrowed it from Drayton or Daniel, Ronsard or Petrarch, in one or other, if not in all, of whom it no doubt occurs? The marvellous nimbleness of Shakespeare's fancy suggested to him a thousand images, or refinements and variations upon images, which are not to be found in any previous poet; but he did not reject the more obvious conceits merely because he knew or guessed that they had been used before. That Shakespeare accepted certain conventional topics and affectations along with the fashionable sonnet form, all students have long admitted; but I do

not think that Mr. Lee's most praiseworthy industry has established the slightest presumption that any considerable number of the Sonnets are conventional exercises with no real experience or emotion behind them. I believe it will be found that the difference between Shakespeare's Sonnets and the general run of his contemporaries' lies not merely and not mainly in workmanship, but precisely in the intensity of feeling which, in so many of them, pulsates through every line. The very fact, strange and unpleasing as it seems to us, that the most ardent of them are addressed to a man, removes them at once from the merely conventional category. And what sane poet would invent, for purely decorative purposes, the sordid story of the fickle mistress and faithless friend which he who runs may read in them?

Mr. Lee, having found that the "vituperation of a cruel siren" was a commonplace with sonneteers of the sixteenth century, boldly "relegates the Dark Lady to the ranks of the creatures of Shakespeare's fancy." But why was this motive so common? Partly, no doubt, it came as a legacy from the fantastic love-poetry of the Middle Ages; but it kept its place because it represented perhaps the most ingrained instinct of masculine human nature. It needed no Schopenhauer to discover that love (especially when it takes the shape of lust) is akin to hate, and that the male is apt bitterly to resent the domination of the female, whether it assert itself in the shape of "cruelty," or of "kindness." He finds his higher nature (or so he regards it) degraded and hampered by a witchery against which his reason rebels—the witchery, as he often feels (and as Shakespeare might feel with some justice), of an altogether inferior being. He takes his revenge, if he be a poet, in passionately vituperative verse; if he be not a poet, in a hundred other ways. Shakespeare's Dark Lady sonnets speak from the very heart of a bitter experience of this order, and are psychological—one might almost say pathological—documents of the first import-

ance. The famous Sonnet 129 ("The expense of spirit in a waste of shame") is the sane and superb utterance of the feeling which, in unbalanced brains, leads to insanity and squalid crime—Whitechapel murders and the like. And Mr. Lee would have us take these profoundly-felt outbursts of recalcitrant, torturing passion, for mere elegant exercises in conventional versification!

As an example of the recklessness with which Mr. Lee enforces his theory of Shakespeare's perpetual borrowings from contemporary sonneteers, let us take the following:—

"In two or three instances Shakespeare showed his reader that he was engaged in a merely literary exercise by offering alternative renderings of the same conventional conceit. In Sonnets 46 and 47 he paraphrases twice over—appropriating many of Watson's words—the unexhilarating notion that the eyes and the heart are in perpetual dispute as to which has the greater influence on lovers."

Now, any one who will turn to these Sonnets will find that they are not "alternative renderings of the same conceit," but are complementary to each other, as their first lines clearly announce: "Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war," and "Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took." Sonnet 46 sets forth the quarrel between eye and heart, Sonnet 47 their reconciliation; they present opposite sides, not "alternative renderings," of the same conceit, and show that the eye and heart are *not* "in perpetual dispute." Turning now to Watson's *Tears of Fancie*, Sonnets 19 and 20 (to which Mr. Lee in a footnote refers us), we find that they do, indeed, set forth a dispute between eye and heart, but of a totally different kind, each accusing the other of having been instrumental in involving their owner in the calamity of unrequited love for a woman. It is monstrous to call Shakespeare's sonnets "paraphrases" of Watson's. He may have borrowed the

bare idea of a dialogue between eye and heart from Watson ; or he may have found it in some other sonneteer ; or he may have evolved it quite independently, the antithesis between the functions of eye and heart in begetting and sustaining love being one that few lovers overlook. But even if we could decide that Shakespeare found the idea in Watson, he worked it out in a totally different way, and no more "paraphrased" Watson than Goethe "paraphrased" Marlowe in dealing with the theme of *Dr. Faustus*.

I pass over a hundred details as to the date, arrangement, and interpretation of the Sonnets, with regard to which Mr. Lee's position seems to me totally untenable, and come to his two grand "identifications," first of the "Mr. W. H." of the Dedication, second of the Rival Poet who has so much exercised the commentators. As we have seen, he did not actually "discover" the eminent Mr. William Hall, but he is certainly the first serious champion that worthy has found. He sets forth, of course, from the assumption that in dedicating to "the onlie begetter of these insuing sonnets," the publisher, Thorpe, used "begetter" in the sense of "procurer," and meant the man who had procured him the manuscript. For this exceedingly rare use of the word he cites no new authority, but contents himself with Hamlet's "acquire and beget a temperance," which is not an analogous case at all, and with the quotation from Dekker's *Satiro-Mastix*, given in Murray's Dictionary, which is a case in point, but is apparently unique. At any rate, we may fairly conclude that Mr. Lee, in all his Elizabethan reading since the date of his conversion to the Southamptonite faith, has not come across another instance, else he would surely have cited it. Well, having determined that the "begetter" meant the procurer of the manuscript, Mr. Lee looks around the "W. H.'s" of the period for a likely "procurer," and pitches upon one William Hall, a struggling publisher, and therefore a trade rival of Thorpe's. By Mr.

Lee's own showing there was a keen competition between these minor publishers for manuscripts by well-known authors. Why on earth should Hall, having begged, borrowed or stolen a manuscript by one of the most popular poets of the day, proceed to make it over to one of his competitors, instead of publishing it himself? He did not lack capital, for he was publishing other books at the same time, and was, it would seem, in a rather better way of business than Thorpe. Mr. Lee at one point calls him "a partner in the speculation"; but if that had been so, he would certainly have insisted on having his name in full on the title-page. And, waiving that objection, why should one member of a publishing partnership dedicate a book to the other? Can we conceive "Smith" dedicating to "Elder," or "Chatto" to "Windus"? The object of a dedication at that period was, in most instances, to procure a money payment from a man of rank or wealth, or at any rate to enlist the interest and protection of an influential patron. What good could William Hall, whether as partner or rival, do to Thomas Thorpe's venture? It is true that Mr. Lee cites cases in which dedications were prompted, as they are to-day, by mere private friendship; but there is nothing to show that there existed any friendship, or even acquaintanceship, between Thorpe and Hall. The one bond of union between them that Mr. Lee can discover is that Hall once employed a printer who on several occasions did work for Thorpe. An insufficient reason, one would think, for swearing eternal friendship.

Altogether, this attempt to identify "W. H." with William Hall must rank among the wildest extravagances of conjecture. On the other hand, Mr. Lee makes not the slightest effort to meet the suggestion that, while William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, could not possibly permit the record of a scandalous episode of his youth to be openly dedicated to him, he might not be averse from the publication of this memorial of his friendship with

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Shakespeare and his conquest of Mary Fitton, with just such an indication of the identity of the hero as should put certain readers on the right track, while enabling him formally to disclaim all knowledge of the matter. It is even possible that he gave Thorpe the manuscript for publication, in which case he would be the "begetter of these insuing sonnets" in both senses, and, in so far, Mr. Lee might still be happy.

Now for the Rival Poet before whom Shakespeare, in humility perhaps affected but certainly not burlesqued, professes to bow as before his superior. He must, of course, be looked for among the eulogists of Southampton, and Mr. Lee reviews them all, to pitch at last upon one Barnabe Barnes, author of a collection of sonnets, madrigals, and elegies entitled *Parthenophe and Parthenophil*. What is the evidence? First, that Barnes, in a sonnet addressed to Southampton, called him "virtuous," and that Shakespeare said his dreaded rival, when lending his patron "virtue," was guilty of plagiarism, for he "stole that word" from his patron's "behaviour." Second, that Barnes called Southampton's eyes "heavenly lamps," and expressed an ambition "by flight to rise" to a height worthy of Southampton's "virtues," while Shakespeare complained that his patron's eyes had "added feathers to the learned's wing." Third, that Barnes twice uses the word "hymns" of his poems, and that Shakespeare declares that he "cries amen to every hymn that able spirit [his rival] affords." In thus stating the case I have lent it a certain speciousness: but what do we find on examination? That *Parthenophe and Parthenophil* is not dedicated to Southampton at all, but to "the right noble and vertuous gentleman, M. William Percy Esquier"; that the sonnet to Southampton, on which this whole theory is based, is only one of six complimentary poems at the end of the book, addressed to the Earl of Northumberland, the Earl of Essex, the Earl of Southampton, the Countess of Pembroke, the Lady Strange,

and the Lady Bridget Manners ; that both Northumberland and Essex (to say nothing of the ladies) are praised for their "vertues" quite as much as Southampton ; that Shakespeare not only says, "he lends thee virtue," but "beauty doth he give," whereas Barnes says no word of his lordship's beauty ; and finally, that whereas the "hymns" to which Shakespeare says "amen" are patently a whole series of panegyrical poems to his friend, this one poor sonnet, the third of a set of conventional compliments, is the only "hymn" or poem of any sort that Barnes can be found to have addressed to Southampton. Moreover, one cannot conceive how Mr. Lee could read three pages of Barnes's work, and then imagine for a moment that Shakespeare could possibly have written of "the proud full sail of his great verse."

When another edition of his book is called for, I strongly recommend Mr. Lee to attempt an impartial statement of both the Southampton and the Pembroke case, and not to launch out into conjectures, which might be interesting enough in a magazine article, but ought not to be admitted into a text-book or work of reference until they have stood the test of criticism. I earnestly implore him, too, not to deface his book with such childish and long-exploded misreadings as that which takes the "fair assistance" of Sonnet 78 to refer to pecuniary presents, or that which reads in the "child of State" of Sonnet 124, an allusion to Southampton's position as a ward of the Crown.

“THE TRUE SHAKESPEARE”

“THE True Shakespeare : an Essay in Realistic Criticism,” is the title of a series of papers which Mr. Frank Harris is contributing to the *Saturday Review*. Two only have appeared, and it would seem that there are at least two more to come ; so that Mr. Harris’s case is as yet far from complete. Its ingenuity, however, is already apparent, as well as certain surface objections to it which the coming papers may or may not remove. It is no doubt unfair to criticise a half-developed theory ; but the remarks I propose to make are in the nature of suggestion or inquiry rather than of criticism. Keeping an open mind with regard to the theory as a whole, I note one or two difficulties which present themselves to a candid reader of that part of the argument already before us. If Mr. Harris can clear them up in his subsequent papers, his theory will be all the more convincing.

What, then, is Mr. Harris’s theory ? It is, briefly, that the real, ultimate essence of the dramatic Proteus is to be seized, not in his successful, but in his unsuccessful metamorphoses—in the form towards which he relapses when he has made an imperfect effort at self-transfiguration. Dr. Jekyll (the illustration is mine, not Mr. Harris’s) proved himself to be fundamentally Mr. Hyde, when, even as he fancied that he was Jekyllizing most successfully, he saw by his hairy hand that, against his own will and without his own knowledge, he had slipped

back into the skin of the abhorrent little monster. If, then, we can find a character into which Shakespeare stumbles, as it were, in unguarded moments, when he intermits, or fails in, his effort to be somebody else, we may conclude that that character is the real Shakespeare. Such a character Mr. Harris has discovered—not a low and Hyde-like character, I hasten to add, but an eminently creditable and sympathetic one. When Shakespeare stumbles, he stumbles upwards. In a word, if we look for *Shakespeare malgré lui*, we find—Hamlet.

At first sight, Mr. Harris admits, this does not look like a great discovery. We all know that Shakespeare dwelt with a peculiar fondness on Hamlet, working at him, elaborating him, for years, and giving him twenty times more to say than the action of the drama strictly required. He is Shakespeare's "deepest and most complex character," granted; and we are willing enough to grant, for the purposes of the present argument (though scarcely as a universal postulate), that a dramatist's "deepest and most complex character will assuredly be most like himself." What has not hitherto been realised, according to Mr. Harris, is the way in which Shakespeare, throughout his career, was haunted by Hamlet, under all sorts of different games and disguises. Hazlitt long ago declared that "Romeo is Hamlet in love," and many critics have noted that Jaques is a preliminary study for Hamlet. But it has been reserved for Mr. Harris to point out that in a play which, from the nature of its plot, demanded a totally different protagonist, Shakespeare has yielded to the obsession of the Hamlet personality, and given us the Prince of Denmark over again. "What play is this?" you ask; and Mr. Harris answers—*Macbeth*! At the first blush, you exclaim in astonishment, "What! the grimly mediæval Scottish thane is the same character as the graceful and sceptical young Prince of the Renaissance, placed, indeed, in a mediæval fable, but feeling and showing himself to be born out of due time!" Season

your admiration for a while, and read Mr. Harris's second article, in which he goes through *Macbeth* scene by scene, almost speech by speech, and argues that at every point Macbeth says precisely what Hamlet would have said under the circumstances. “In the first act of *Macbeth*,” according to him, “Hamlet is more clearly sketched than in the first act of *Hamlet*.” Even Hamlet's culture, or at any rate his bookishness, reappears in Macbeth. It is not the Keltic barbarian but the student of Wittenberg who says—

Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are registered where every day I turn
The leaf to read.

I quote this simply as one instance among many of Mr. Harris's ingenuity. He admits that as Romeo is a younger, so Macbeth is an older, Hamlet ; but he declares, in sum, that “the crying difference of situation only brings out the essential identity of the two characters. The two portraits are of the same person and finished to the fingertips.”

Putting aside, for the moment, this extreme statement of the case, we may readily admit that many of Macbeth's speeches might be placed in the mouth of Hamlet without arousing the slightest sense of incongruity. I do not remember to have seen this pointed out before ; and it is well worth noting. But if we are to infer an irresistible bias on Shakespeare's part towards the Hamlet type of character—a bias so strong as to override dramatic propriety or plausibility—we must clearly establish a point which Mr. Harris rather hastily takes for granted. Is Macbeth “a Hamlet *entangled in an action which is utterly unsuited to his character*” ? Is there a “crying difference of situation” which, in the absence of any bias in the poet's mind, would have compelled him to body forth equally diverse characters ? Mr. Harris, I think, assumes this too lightly. May it not rather be said that Hamlet and Macbeth are placed in very analogous situations ? They are *unwilling*

victims to the fascination of an idea—there is a formula which covers both cases. Hamlet is fascinated by the idea of revenge, Macbeth by the idea of sovereignty; in both cases the idea originates in supernatural promptings; in both cases the fundamental nature of the man kicks against the pricks. "Exactly my point!" Mr. Harris may say, "Why should Macbeth's nature kick against the pricks? It does not in the original legend; nor do the period and place of the action render any such tenderness of conscience inherently probable. The simple fact is that Shakespeare disregarded the incongruous outward circumstances, and instinctively reproduced his own Hamlet-nature." But in the case of Hamlet himself the original legend as little suggests the character Shakespeare drew, and the outward circumstances are equally incongruous. In both instances (I put it to Mr. Harris) Shakespeare modernised, subtilised, humanised his protagonist, not in order to body forth his own character, but simply to make the theme more interesting and to secure that conflict in which lies the essence of drama. In the formula above suggested, the chief stress lies upon the word "unwilling." Mr. Harris's argument assumes that while Hamlet is naturally and necessarily "unwilling," Macbeth's recalcitrance is improbable, and arises from an involuntary and perhaps unconscious intrusion of Shakespeare's own nature. I reply that the unwillingness is equally probable or improbable in both cases, and arises in both cases from the desire to produce an effective play. A willing Hamlet, using craft only as a cloak for his inexorable revenge, would have given us (probably *had* given the public of 1590 or thereabouts, in the older *Hamblett*) a mere tragedy of gore, another *Titus Andronicus*. A genuinely "bloody, bold, and resolute" Macbeth would have given us another *Richard III*. Shakespeare had done with Titus and Richard. Both he and his public were now interested in more complex studies. Therefore he made Hamlet and Macbeth humane, sceptical, and somewhat world-weary

personages, born into barbarous states of society, and goaded by fate into inhuman and uncongenial courses. In so far as they were keenly self-conscious, reflective, modern spirits, they resembled Shakespeare himself. So far, I am inclined to think, and no further.

The difference between Hamlet and Macbeth, I take it, is this: whereas Hamlet is sane, Macbeth is to all intents and purposes mad. Do not cry out upon the paradox, but think for a moment. The deed towards which Hamlet is driven represents itself to his mind as an act of justice, even of imperative duty. His will is in reality bent upon it; he blames himself for his physical and metaphysical hesitancies, as for a shameful infirmity. Macbeth, on the other hand, is literally “possessed.” He is “beside himself” from first to last. A mere tool in the hands of the Witches and that fourth and direst Witch, his wife, he acts in direct opposition to his real will, the genuine promptings of his nature. His sane self stands by and admonishes him of the madness of his action; but a demon has entered into him and stifles the voice of sanity. He never really expects either happiness or material prosperity to ensue upon his crimes, but staggers from murder to murder in a will-less vertigo. He is hypnotised by the Weird Sisters, and acts upon the “suggestion” of hell. He is like a man who, having dreamt of falling over a particular cliff, is impelled by an irresistible fascination to stand on the verge of the precipice, and, being there, is seized with dizziness and dashes himself to pieces. Hamlet cannot screw himself up to doing what he really wants to do—a state of mind to which the sanest of us are subject. Macbeth does in spite of himself what he really wants not to do—“a document in madness.”

I am curious to know how Mr. Harris reconciles with his Hamlet-theory Shakespeare’s remarkable shrewdness and unflinching competence in the practical business of life. This objection is so obvious that he must of course have foreseen it, and is no doubt prepared with an ingenious

answer. For the rest, he promises in his coming papers to show how "other characters of Shakespeare perpetually fall out of their own character and speak with Hamlet's voice." I await the demonstration with the keenest interest; suggesting in the meantime that Mr. Harris should beware of mistaking a mere trick of voice—a mannerism of diction or dramatic style—for a manifestation of essential character.

MR. GEORGE WYNDHAM ON SHAKESPEARE'S POEMS



To the lover of thorough literary craftsmanship, Mr. Wyndham's edition of Shakespeare's poems is a pure delight. It is certainly one of the best pieces of editing in the language. It shows well-nourished scholarship, diligence, patience, accuracy, a strong judicial faculty, and an all-pervading grace of manner and amenity of spirit. Dealing, in the Sonnets, with one of the most fiercely-contested of literary problems, Mr. Wyndham says not a word that can possibly offend even the most morbid susceptibilities of the scholars from whom he dissents. This controversial courtesy is rare, and by no means easy. Perhaps even Mr. Wyndham would now and then fail in it if he definitely took up the cudgels (a suggestive metaphor!) on behalf of either Southampton or Pembroke. But he purposely refrains from doing so. His business is with the Sonnets as literature, not as biographical documents. He is simply "intent on the exquisite response of Shakespeare's art to the inspiration of Beauty." "A riddle," he says, "will always arrest and tease the attention; but on that very account we cannot pursue the sport of running down the answer, unless we make a sacrifice of all other solace. Had the Sphinx's enigma been less transparent, it must have wrecked the play of Sophocles, for the minds of the

audience would have stayed at the outset : much in the manner of trippers to Hampton Court who spend their whole time in the Maze." But while he declines to plunge into the maze, he takes a bird's-eye view of it, and gives those who are already illabyrinthed some very helpful indications of the way out.

Mr. Wyndham's work has the defects, as well as the infinitely greater qualities, of a labour of love. He shows the lover's inability to see the object of his passion in a normal perspective. He does not mispraise or overpraise any single trait in *Venus and Adonis* or *Lucrece*, but he implies rather than expresses an untenable view of their absolute beauty and vitality. "The Poems," he says, "have but rarely been printed hand in hand (so to speak) and apart from the plays. This strange omission did not follow, as I think, on any deliberate judgment ; it was rather the accidental outcome of the greater interest aroused by the Plays." And again (of certain lines from *Lucrece*) : "They may rank with the few which Arnold chose for standards from the poetry of all ages ; yet by a caprice of literary criticism they are never quoted, and are scarce so much as known." The eulogy of such lines as

And dying eyes gleamed forth their ashy lights ;
or
For Sorrow, like a heavy hanging bell,
Once set on ringing with his own weight goes,

X is no whit overdone ; yet there is more of the lover than of the philosophic student in the assumption of a "caprice of criticism," or an accidental overshadowing of the poems by the plays. Time may be trusted to eliminate caprice and correct accident ; and since, in this case, two centuries and a half have not recaptured for the poems the popularity they originally enjoyed when they chimed with the fashion of the hour, we may confidently infer that there is no caprice or accident in the matter, but rather a manifestation of psychological necessity. To the

student of style, and especially to the enthusiast for Shakespeare's early manner, the Poems are enormously interesting and attractive. But it is quite possible to be an ardent and fairly catholic lover of poetry without cherishing a special affection for Shakespeare's early manner; and to the general reader—the man who loves his Chaucer, his Milton, his Keats, aye, and his *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*—*Venus and Aeonis* and *Lucrece* will always seem things of lifeless splendour and glittering frigidity. Far from being overshadowed by the plays, they are read once by most people, because they were written by the man who wrote the plays—and never read again. True, they abound in beauties; they are, if you will, mosaics of the costliest poetic jewels; but they lack organic life. They are hard and cold to the touch; and it is no caprice which prefers the warm humanity of Chaucer or the golden languor of Keats. Mr. Wyndham himself, indeed, sums up the whole matter in a passing phrase, when he says, with that easy felicity which marks his style: "In Shakespeare's Poems the beauty and curiosity of the ceremonial ever obscure the worship of the god."

Here is the passage in which Mr. Wyndham's transcendental theory of the inspiration of the Poems and Sonnets is most definitely stated:—

"Diving deeper than diction, alliteration, and rhythm; deeper than the decoration of blazoned colours and the labyrinthine interweaving of images, now budding as it were from nature, and now beaten as by an artificer out of some precious metal: you discover beneath this general interpretation of Phenomenal Beauty, a gospel of Ideal Beauty, a confession of faith in Beauty as a principle of life. And note—for the coincidence is vital—that these, the esoteric themes of *Venus and Adonis*, are the essential themes of the 'Sonnets.' In Stanza xxii. :—

"Fair flowers that are not gathered in their prime
Rot and consume themselves in little time :—

and in Stanzas xxvii., xxviii., xxix., you have the whole arguments of Sonnets i.-xix. In Stanza clxxx. :—

“Alas, poor world, what treasure hast thou lost !
 What face remains alive that's worth the viewing ?
 Whose tongue is music now ? what canst thou boast
 Of things long since, or anything insuing ?
 The flowers are sweet, their colours fresh and trim ;
 But true sweet beauty liv'd and died with him :—

you have that metaphysical gauging of the mystical importance of some one incarnation of Beauty viewed from imaginary standpoints in time, which was afterwards to be elaborated in Sonnets xiv., xix., lix., lxvii., lxviii., civ., cvi. And in Stanza clxx. :—

“For he being dead, with him is beautie slaine,
 And beautie dead, black Chaos comes again—

you have the succinct *credo* in that incarnation of an Ideal Beauty, of which all other lovely semblances are but ‘shadows’ and ‘counterfeits,’ which was to find a fuller declaration in Sonnets xxxi. and liii. and xcvi.”

All this, of course, is formally and literally undeniable. The question is whether this *credo* was deeply implanted in Shakespeare's soul, or a mere lip-formula, a decorative commonplace, adopted, with no very profound realisation of its philosophic import, from the current Platonisings of the day. Mr. Wyndham, I am inclined to think, attributes too much serious intention to poems which are rather to be regarded as brilliant exercises on conventional themes. The later and greater Sonnets, indeed, do not come under this description. The theories which would make them impersonal or allegorical utterances are wholly untenable. But precisely in those Sonnets to which Mr. Wyndham refers, the Sonnets celebrating and ringing the changes on the friend's beauty, there is an unmistakable element of convention. The poet's feeling, genuine enough from the first, perhaps, and certainly growing more

genuine as the series progresses, puts on a modish garb in hymning the graces of "Mr. W. H.," or, in other words, follows and outstrips the poetic fashion of the day. The love-poetry of every period has its favourite tricks of hyperbole, and Shakespeare's beauty-sonnets, to my thinking, are rhetorical rather than philosophical in their inspiration. As for *Venus and Adonis*, if it possessed the "high seriousness" which Mr. Wyndham claims for it (at least by implication), it would hold a very different rank in the literature of the world. It is manifestly an exercise, the work of a young man trying his tools. Where it ceases to be pictorial it becomes, in a certain sense, dramatic—that is to say, the poet takes hold of a passion and twists it about until he has wrung from it the last possible drop of figurative eloquence. Such an image as—

For he being dead, with him is beautie slaine,
And beautie dead, black Chaos comes again,

was in effect obligatory, and cannot rightly be taken (in my judgment) as either expressing or foreshadowing any definite philosophical creed. His desire to make Shakespeare in the Poems a conscious and deliberate metaphysician betrays Mr. Wyndham into one of the very few extravagances of interpretation contained in this volume. "The phrase 'genio Socratem,'" he says, "applied to him in the epitaph on his monument, attests his fondness for Platonic theories." "This monument doth attest too much, methinks."

Mr. Wyndham's introduction contains a spirited and altogether admirable sketch of Shakespeare's career, crammed with fact and theory, yet everywhere touched with a fine literary grace. Especially remarkable are the pages dealing with the "Poetomachia," the Dekker-Jonson feud, in which Shakespeare's part (if, indeed, he took any part in it) is so difficult to trace. Mr. Wyndham's suggestion that *Troilus and Cressida* in one stage of its existence may

have been a move in this campaign is worth careful consideration. The hunt for personal allusions is a dangerously fascinating sport, which should be undertaken only by scholars of unimpeachable sanity (a harder condition than the uninitiated might imagine); but there is doubtless a good deal still to be learnt, and unlearnt, in that field of research. Mr. Wyndham very justly says:—

“We are apt to reconstruct this theatric world, in which Shakespeare had his being, fancifully: from his Plays rather than from the Plays of his contemporaries, and from the few among his Plays which are our favourites, just because they differ most widely from theirs. But his world of everyday effort and experience was not altogether, as at such times it may seem to us, a garden of fair flowers and softly sighing winds and delicate perfumes, nor altogether a gorgeous gallery of gallant inventions: it was also garish, strident, pungent; a Donnybrook Fair of society journalists, a nightmare of Gillray caricature.”

Take it all in all, this volume is an example of editing as a fine art, for which we can scarcely be too grateful. It shows that style may go hand in hand with scholarship, and urbanity with conviction. There are points—though surprisingly few, considering the compass of the work and the multitude of the views expressed—where one cannot agree with Mr. Wyndham; but there is not a page that is not interesting, stimulating, the fruit of original thought and honest work.

“PELLEAS AND MELISANDE”

SOME time ago Mr. Bernard Shaw accused me of having, as he put it, “conferred the Order of the Swan” upon M. Maeterlinck—in other words, compared him with Shakespeare. Mr. Shaw’s memory played him false. It was a French critic who did M. Maeterlinck the grave disservice of dubbing him the Belgian Shakespeare, and I was the first—literally, not figuratively, the first—to ridicule the self-destructive hyperbole. Yet M. Mirbeau—I think it was he—had probably a just enough critical idea in his mind, if only he had given it less haphazard expression. If he had called M. Maeterlinck, not a Belgian Shakespeare, but a Flemish Elizabethan, he would have been near the mark ; and if, instead of Elizabethan, he had said Jacobean, he would have hit the very bull’s-eye. M. Maeterlinck is next-of-kin to Webster and Ford ; and in so far as Shakespeare included in his all-embracing genius the sombre fantasy, the tragic reticences, of his younger contemporaries, he also included something of the peculiar poetic gift of M. Maeterlinck. Shakespeare was now and then, and in some of his most exquisite passages, an English Maeterlinck ; but this proposition does not imply its converse. What M. Mirbeau probably meant to say was that the author of *The Princess Maleine* re-incarnated a certain side of the Elizabethan genius ; and if this was his meaning, M. Maeterlinck’s later productions have amply justified it. Imagine John Ford purged of the

Elizabethan lust of blood, steeped in German and American transcendentalism, and enabled to write, not for the rude groundlings of the Bankside, where the bear-garden jostled the playhouse, but for a select audience of one—to wit, his own soul—imagine all this, and you see in outline, at any rate, the spiritual physiognomy of the author of *Pelleas and Melisande*. M. Maeterlinck has discovered (with some aid, no doubt, from Alfred de Musset and his own countryman, Van Lerberghe) that formula of reticence and suggestion towards which Webster and Ford were always blindly groping. The rhetorical convention of their age was too strong for them, and they had to “unpack their heart with words” whether they would or no. But we feel that their rhetoric is little more than padding, and that their true genius appears, not in what they say, but in what they leave unsaid. M. Maeterlinck’s kindred genius is cumbered with no rhetorical convention. His dialogue (at its best) is a perfect instrument for the bodying forth of his intense, though limited, dramatic imagination, his sensitive psychological instinct, and his profound metaphysical intuition.

The theme of *Pelleas and Melisande* is of elemental simplicity. It must have been one of the earliest of tragedies; it will assuredly be one of the latest. As soon as the idea of marriage, or rather of the exclusive ownership of a woman by a man, took hold upon the human mind, this complication must have followed in its train. A young girl mates herself, will-lessly, ignorantly, with a man long past his prime; and no sooner is she irrevocably his than she encounters a youth of her own age, and for the first time hears the voice of Nature and knows what love is. The children stretch out their hands to each other across the abyss which separates them. The man knows that they are obeying an imperious instinct, and in his inmost, unconscious soul he pities them; but he obeys his own no less imperious instinct, compounded of passion and self-love; he hurls them one after another

into the abyss; and then, in an agony of remorse and shame, he plunges in after them. M. Maeterlinck, as his habit is, seizes upon the essential, fundamental, permanent factors in this theme. He eliminates period and place; he eliminates culture and religion; he presents the human soul in its ultimate expression, divested of everything except sheer humanity. To call his people “primitive” would be misleading, for that would be to assign them a place, however vague, in the historic or prehistoric evolution of the race. They never had any existence on the common earth. They are not barbarous but ultra-refined, supersensitive. If we must locate them in time at all, they belong to the far future rather than the past. Their morality is not founded on religious dogma or social tradition, and still less on ethical reasoning. Society does not exist for Pelleas and Melisande, nor are they haunted by any sense of “sin.” It is not because Melisande is married to Golaud, but because Golaud loves her, that she and Pelleas fear and fight against their passion. The malice of chance has so ordered things that before their instincts could rush forth to each other a third instinct had interposed between them; and they all feel from the outset that from the hurtling of these three instincts nothing but death can ensue. This deep psychological necessity puts on a symbolic guise in M. Maeterlinck’s imagination, and appears as a dimly divined external Power, forcing them at every turn along the path which leads to doom. Symbolism is to M. Maeterlinck what music is to Wagner—the representation of the world-will, the torrent of unconscious force on which our puny consciousness is swept along. Both poets are immoral in the sense that they practically ignore the illusion of free-will which is the basis of current morality. And here they undeniably misrepresent the human soul; for this illusion is itself a force—nay, the greatest spiritual force in the world. But if their genius impels them to look at life from the standpoint of pure metaphysics, and if, in so doing, they

find the inspiration for noble and beautiful works of art, who shall deny that they make, in the long run, for the larger light?

In technique, as in date of production, *Pelleas and Melisande* stands half-way between *The Princess Maleine* and *Aglavaine and Selysette*. A good deal of the poet's earlier manner still clings to it—in the servant scenes, for example, and the frequent repetitions in the dialogue. Something has been done in the stage version to bring the text nearer to his later and more mature style; and still more might have been done with advantage. But how admirable, how truly dramatic, is the process of the action! First we have the meeting of Golaud and Melisande, both lost in the forest, and taking hands, despite Melisande's instinctive shrinking, only to wander blindly out of one maze into another. Then Arkel, the wise old Arkel, humane and humble of spirit, interferes to prevent Pelleas from setting forth to visit his sick friend; and we feel that though Arkel has the best of reasons on his side, his wisdom is foolishness. Next comes the meeting of Pelleas and Melisande by the fountain, the fascination that lures her to its brink, and the loss of her wedding-ring. "What shall we tell Golaud?" she asks, and Pelleas answers, "The truth, the truth." But when Golaud notices the loss of the ring, Melisande, in spite of herself, tells him a lie; and henceforth she and Pelleas are linked by the strong chain of complicity in deception. So the action proceeds from step to step, without a pause, without a hiatus, each new phase of the lovers' passion and the husband's suspicion marked by some exquisitely ingenious touch of dramatic symbolism. Where shall we find a more beautiful invention than the scene in which Melisande's hair flows over the window-sill to her lover's lips, while her doves fly away from her tower? Where a more heartrending piece of drama than Golaud's questioning of little Yniold? The dialogue in all the crucial scenes is electrical with passion and often with a profound dramatic

truth. For the dramatist in M. Maeterlinck is at least as strong as the mystic or symbolist. If one were to re-write this play (it could quite well be done) as a drama of common life, excluding symbolism altogether, one could probably retain at least half of the existing dialogue; and where it could be retained at all, it could not possibly be bettered.

Mr. Forbes Robertson deserves all possible credit for the genuinely artistic spirit which impelled him to put this poem on the stage. Its mere external beauty (with Mrs. Campbell in the part of Melisande) is so great that I have no doubt his enterprise will be rewarded; but he cannot have expected any large return for his outlay of thought, labour, and money. How could such art ever be popular? What has Maeterlinck to say to the people who crowd to *The Greek Slave*, or *The French Maid*, or even *The Little Minister*? His charm, for those who are capable of feeling it, lies in his intense realisation of the two great mysteries of life—the mystery of the soul within and of the universe without. For the average sensual man these mysteries do not exist, while the man who is a little above the average thinks of them only as enigmas which have been solved by this or that religious or philosophical or scientific system. M. Maeterlinck has no solution to present. He throws flash-lights, it is true, both into the soul and into the ambient immensities, but they serve only to reveal deeps beyond deeps unfathomable. For the great majority all this has no meaning. It can see in M. Maeterlinck only a teller of gruesome nursery tales, with an inconsequent, babbling style, and no sense of humour. But there is a thinking minority, even among the theatrical public, and it will no doubt appreciate this spirited attempt to cater for it.



“TRELAWNY OF THE ‘WELLS’”

ONE of the most delightful works of a great and original humorist—that is *Trelawny of the “Wells.”* A memorable chapter in our theatrical history delicately and ingeniously dramatised—that is *Trelawny of the “Wells.”* A graceful homage from the captain of to-day to the pioneer of yesterday, the man who paved the way for all his effort and achievement—that is *Trelawny of the “Wells.”* But for Robertson there would have been no Pinero. It was Robertson, with the help of “Marie Wilton,” her husband, and comrades, who plucked the drama out of the slough of the 'fifties, and set it on the upward path again. He started the movement; he invented (to all intents and purposes) the methods which Mr. Pinero and others have applied to ends he dreamed not of. It was a generous inspiration on Mr. Pinero's part to claim for him on the open stage, in this poetico-humorous parable, the honour which is his due.

It is not in the plot of this “comediatta” that its merit lies. The plot is, appropriately enough, a Robertsonian romance. Anything else, as Miss Trafalgar Gower would say, would be out of place. Even the serious sentiment of the play is delightfully 1860. Rose's change of heart, for instance, in reflecting upon her experiences in Cavendish Square, belongs as clearly to the period as her

crinolines and her pork-pie hat. “How badly I behaved in Cavendish Square!” she says, “how unlike a young lady!” The very turn of phrase calls up a vision of an almond-faced Leech heroine, and makes the alert modern mask of Miss Irene Vanbrugh seem almost an anachronism. Rose Trelawny foresees no “Revolt of the Daughters”; the cycle, the latch-key, and the Pioneer Club are remote from her wildest dreams. If she is alive to-day, as I trust she is, I can fancy her quoting her great-aunt Trafalgar as she watches her little granddaughter careering on a bicycle round Cavendish Square. The ideal of the “young lady” is paramount throughout, in the mind of Rose, of Tom Wrench, of Arthur Gower, of the veriest Bohemian in the company. Mr. Pinero has never shown a finer literary skill than in hitting so accurately this delicate shade of difference from our own habits of thought and speech, and avoiding the intrusion, nay the slightest foreshadowing, of more modern ideas. Even such a passage as the following whispers its date to the sensitive ear:—

“IMOGEN. You see, things haven’t been going at all satisfactorily at the Olympic lately. There’s Miss Puddifant——

“TOM. I know—no lady.

“IMOGEN. *How* do you know?

“TOM. Guessed.

“IMOGEN. Quite right.”

The play, then, is a Robertsonian tribute to Robertson; yet how far above the Robertsonian level is the fecundity of invention which fills every corner of the canvas with quaint, humorous, moving details! There is enough intellectual power in this “comedietta” to furnish forth half a dozen cup-and-saucer comedies. The pressure of thought to the square inch is as high in *Trelawny* as in Mr. Pinero’s most serious work. It is evident that he feels the true artist’s inability to put less than his whole strength into whatever his hand finds to do. The first and third {

acts are certainly the best in the play. The second, though very amusing in detail, is at once more extravagant and more commonplace in conception than the rest; while the fourth, novel and entertaining as it is, forms a somewhat perfunctory winding up of the action. The first act, on the other hand, is as full of character as it is gay, animated, attractive; while the third is a gem without a flaw, brilliantly conceived, and executed with consummate mastery. I know few things more touching in a small way than the change of Rose's twice repeated exclamation of the first act, "Poor mother! I hope she sees!" into "Poor mother! I hope she doesn't see!" when she has "got her notice." The heroic conduct of Mr. Gadd on being offered a part in the pantomime forms such a delectable episode that not even inadequate acting could spoil it. And then, what fine amends Mr. Pinero makes to his old profession in that admirable scene in which the chance mention of the name of Edmund Kean acts like a charm on the cantankerous old Vice-Chancellor, and sets him glowing with the memory of the great emotions of his youth! This passage is not only imaginative and touching in itself, but leads up dexterously to the quaint and delightful end of the act, where Tom Wrench at last finds a sympathetic audience to listen to his despised comedy. How Dickens would have rejoiced in this act and the first — nay, in the whole play! How generously he would have recognised a kindred genius! Such comparisons, however, are apt to do injustice to both parties. What I mean is that in this play, and especially in the third act, Mr. Pinero has produced effects worthy of Dickens at his best, in a far more difficult medium than Dickens ever attempted. For the stage-poet is to the novelist as the weaver of ballades to the writer of ballads.

And now mark the retribution which has overtaken Mr. Pinero! He has celebrated, he has chuckled over, the displacement of the old school of acting by the new; he has invited us to smile, instead of dropping a tear, when

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Mr. James Telfer, the tragedian of “the Wells,” is reduced to accepting, in a “new-fangled” comedy, the trumpery part of “an old, stagey, out-of-date actor,” a part in which there is “not one *real* speech : nothing to dig your teeth into.” He has satirised in a hundred touches the frowzy old stock-company with its hard-and-fast “lines of business” ; and now, behold ! the new school, whose advent he acclaims, altogether fails to back him up and justify his complacency. If any surviving Telfer of “the Wells” was present on the first night, he must have felt himself amply avenged for all the ridicule cast upon the ideals and manners of his palmy days. I do not mean that the performance was altogether bad ; three or four of the actors, who fortunately held the leading parts, were adequate without being specially brilliant ; but most of the subordinate characters, on whom the effect of the comedy so largely depends, were either feebly presented or fatally mis-presented. In every revolution there is loss as well as gain ; and we shall have to undo, in a certain measure, the work of the revolution which Mr. Pinero celebrates—that which substituted for the James Telfers of yesterday the Arthur Gowers of to-day.

“THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE”

AM I singular, I wonder, in feeling, as the nineteenth century dwindles towards its vanishing-point, a sensible regret at the thought that the eighteenth century will no longer be our next-door neighbour, but will be shifted back, as it were, and become, at a single stroke of the clock, a hundred years farther off? One can part from the nineteenth century stoically enough. It has had its great moments and its great men; but the “to-be-continued-in-our-next” interest carries us imperiously forward, and we feel that the coming chapters promise to be still more sensational and romantic than those of the current instalment. But the eighteenth century, as Mr. Kipling would say, is another story; another story altogether; by a different author, one might almost fancy. It was, or at least we love to imagine it, a time of sunlit leisure and elegant repose, of intellectual, not mechanical, civilisation. It was sufficiently like our own time to be real to us, sufficiently unlike to be infinitely, pathetically quaint. It affords the imagination a resting-place from the fret and fever of to-day, the breathless hopes, the formless fears—a resting-place such as we cannot find in the eager, turbulent, semi-barbarous centuries which preceded it. Urbane it was in a very high degree, yet not over-civilised. It had put off the horrors of mediævalism and had not yet put on the horrors of civilisation, material or spiritual. Is it not melancholy, then, to have a whole century thrusting itself between us and this (illusory but none the less fascinating)

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golden age? I feel it so, I confess; and so, apparently, does Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, author of *The Manœuvres of Jane*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre.

In *The Manœuvres of Jane*, Mr. Jones has practically wiped out the nineteenth century. He takes us straight back to 1750 or thereabouts—to the placid interval, after Dick Steele had left English comedy clean, and before Dick Sheridan had made it brilliant. His characters, it is true, wear modern costumes; they elope in railway trains instead of post-chaises; and they communicate by means of telegrams, not of running-footmen. But these are matters of the merest detail. Both in substance and in spirit, the comedy belongs to last century. Not a single modern idea or ideal intrudes into it. This is a new departure for Mr. Jones, and indicates, no doubt, a momentary weariness of the aforesaid fret and fever of modern life. Hitherto he has made it rather a point to be abreast of his age. Matthew Arnold having introduced him to the *Zeitgeist*, he has remained on familiar terms with that potentate. There has always been a good deal—perhaps a little too much—of *Nineteenth Century* culture about his work. But now, and for the purposes of this play, he has shaken all that off, and gone straight back to the simple themes, the child-like psychology, of our great-grandfathers. What are his personages? The good old heavy father (a nabob of course, but hailing from the Cape instead of Bengal); a self-willed, somewhat hoydenish daughter, entrusted to the care of a sententious, frumpish duenna whom she outwits and befools; a bluff country squire who schemes to bring about a marriage between the heiress and his nincompoop nephew; a gallant young lover detested by the heavy father; the heiress's designing companion and confidant, who clears the way for the lovers by ensnaring the nincompoop lord; and finally, a Little Pickle who keeps the intrigue going by overhearing plots and blabbing or threatening to blab. The characters are so thoroughly eighteenth-century that we almost resent

their, certainly outlandish, but at the same time meaningless names: Nangle, Beechinor, Bapchild, Bostock, Langton, etc. The nabob should have been called Sir Gregory Goldcalf; his daughter, Evelinda; the lover, Ensign Prettiman; the duenna, Mrs. Furbelow; the nincompoop, Lord Bookworm; and so forth. Jervis Punshon (the 'squire) is the only one of Mr. Jones's names that has quite the eighteenth-century relish about it. The action, on the other hand, is eighteenth-century all over—the hoodwinking of the duenna; the elopement marred by misadventure; the heroine's fit of the vapours at the roadside inn; the return to the Hall (Mr. Jones calls it the Court, but that is a slip of the pen); the wheedling of the heavy father; and the final "Bless you my children!" All this is as eighteenth-century as Addison's wig or Goldsmith's plum-coloured coat. Barring such external trifles as the *Bradshaw* and the telegrams, there is not a single nineteenth-century anachronism in the play. Least of all do we find that most insidious symptom of modernity, the suggestion of any theme or thesis, meaning or moral.

Some of the Haymarket audience seemed to find the play too eighteenth-century for their taste. My own sentiment was strongly with the majority, which shouted down the malcontents. *The Manœuvres of Jane* amused me very much. There is a genuine strain of humour in it, and, what is more, Mr. Jones has the art of getting his humour, whether good, bad, or indifferent (and some of it is not quite of the first quality), well over the footlights. From the theatrical point of view, the play is thoroughly adroit, and from the literary point of view it is at least inoffensive. Nay more, there are some excellent and memorable lines in it. For instance—

"NANGLE. The question is not how I behaved when I was young. The question is how I can stop you from behaving now that I am old, and want you to profit by my experience.

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“JANE. Oh, it's mean to profit by other people's experience, after they have been at all the trouble of collecting it. I want to profit by my own !”

This speech, occurring in the first act, misled me for a moment. It is so eminently and excellently Bernard-Shawish that I fancied Jane was going to prove herself a sister or cousin of the Vivies and Prossies of that playwright of a problematic future. But the flicker of modernism vanished instantly, and we found ourselves comfortably back in the eighteenth century again.

“LORD AND LADY ALGY”

IF Mr. Carton's new comedy *Lord and Lady Algy* is anything less than a great and enduring success, the fact will afford a convincing answer to those theorists who pretend that criticism can neither make nor mar a play. If ever audience enjoyed an evening at the theatre, it was the first-night audience at the Comedy. The first act of the play went to admiration. The second threatened for ten minutes or so to prove languid and scrappy, but from the moment Mr. Hawtrey came on the scene the laughter was loud and incessant, until the concluding situation stirred the house to enthusiasm. The third act—the best of the three—aroused amusement, interest, and sympathy in equal proportions, and brought the evening to a really triumphant conclusion. But the critics!—alack, it takes a great deal more than wit, and ingenuity, and acting perfect in its kind, to content the critics! They are so surfeited with genius, it would seem, that there is no limit to their fastidiousness. I could scarcely believe my eyes when, on the following morning, I opened a paper reputed to be the most influential in things theatrical, and learned that the previous evening had been one of desperate dulness. Then I looked at another paper, and a third—in all the same story of dulness and dissatisfaction. Afterwards, I came across some more lenient and even favourable judgments; but no one said, what to my mind is the essential truth, that *Lord and Lady Algy* is a brilliant and

delightful piece of work, perhaps the best light comedy—as distinguished from serious drama on the one hand and farce on the other—produced within the present decade. Certainly it is the best thing Mr. Carton has done : light comedy is his strong suit, and this is the highest card he has as yet played. That the piece will be greatly successful I cannot doubt : the enjoyment of the audience was too manifest and spontaneous to admit any other prognostic. But if its run falls anywhere short of one hundred and fifty nights, I shall hold the power of criticism to mar the fortunes of a play conclusively established.

If *Lord and Lady Algy* had been attacked on moral grounds, it would have been no easy matter to defend it. Its tone is the reverse of edifying. It bristles with sporting slang, of which, for my part, I am as ignorant as any judge on the bench. Its ethics are at best the ethics of the betting ring, its point of honour that of the Divorce Court. It renders extremely sympathetic a pair of cynical worldlings who have not an idea or an ideal between them. And, to crown all, the reprobate hero is never more amiable or sympathetic than when he is unmistakably and disgracefully drunk. I feel that as a British householder, who cannot afford to gamble or to drink champagne (except to wash down the chicken of managerial orgies) I ought to be outraged and to ask with acrimony why Mr. Redford is not earning his salary. In all seriousness—if we seriously believe in the direct moral influence of dramatic performances—*Lord and Lady Algy* is far more deleterious than the unspeakable *Conquerors*. Its ethical elevation is practically that of the Restoration Comedy, except that it substitutes a kindly for a brutal cynicism. This, to be sure, is an important exception, but not wholly to the good ; for the evil example becomes all the more insidious. But in truth I have small belief in the power of the stage to teach, for good or ill, by direct example. *Lord and Lady Algy* will certainly not raise the tone of fast society, but neither will it make any one a gambler or a drunkard

who would otherwise have been a staid and sober citizen. The ideal it suggests (for an ideal will creep in even here) is not really one of recklessness or vulgarity, but of good-humour and that cheery stoicism which may best be described as "gameness." The truly immoral work, to my thinking, is that which either does, or ought to, sap our self-respect and make us ashamed of our species. That is not the effect of Mr. Carton's play. It has rather something of a tonic quality in helping us to feel that, after all, this is an amusing world to live in.

For ingenuity of construction, and more especially for finish and wit of dialogue, *Lord and Lady Algy* has few rivals on the modern stage. The theme is that of *The School for Scandal*—two brothers, a saint and a scapegrace; the saint making love to a married woman; and the scapegrace becoming the scapegoat of his brother's sins. The resemblance is perfectly obvious and perfectly immaterial; it does not detract one whit from Mr. Carton's originality, any more than Fielding's use of a similar subject in *Tom Jones* detracted from Sheridan's originality. Mr. Carton has modified the theme in a hundred ways, but chiefly in making the part of his Lady Teazle subordinate, and introducing a new personage in the shape of Mrs. Charles Surface, alias Lady Algernon Chetland. Lady Algy, or Ciss as her husband calls her, is a charming character, quaint, cynical, good-hearted, good-tempered, undemonstrative, but true to the core. She has really a touch of race in her, this stoical humorist in petticoats. The relation between her and her husband is, I think, new to the stage, and is delightfully conceived. It might well make the fortune of a worse play. But even apart from this the play is good. The first act is full of amusing situations, and leaves us with our interest keenly on the alert. The fancy-ball scene of the second act opened rather flatly, and I confess my heart sank when I realised that Lord Algy was to come on the scene drunk. But Mr. Carton and Mr. Hawtrey knew what they were about.

The whole of the drunken scene, though not particularly well invented, is so inimitably acted by Mr. Hawtrey as to lose all its unpleasantness and become a thing of pure humour and fantasy ; while the situation at the end of the act, with its little touch of saving sentiment, is admirably conceived. I own I do not quite see the point of bringing the jockey, Mawbey Jemmett, to the ball, attired as the Young Pretender. The effect is certainly funny, and as a mere drunken freak the thing would pass well enough. But if I understood aright, it was deliberately planned in the preceding act ; in which case I can only set it down as a rather stupid and second-rate thing for Lord Algy to do. The third act is a gem from first to last : the dialogue bright, the situations comically thrilling, the sentiment restrained and characteristic. I am unwilling, even in championing it against undeserved detraction, to make too much of *Lord and Lady Algy*. It is not an ambitious or a pedantic work ; it is, as the play-bill says, a “light comedy,” which, with a little less artistic finish in the dialogue, might easily become a farce ; and it is too slangy, too horsey, too much a thing of the passing moment, to take a permanent place on the stage. But it is all that it pretends to be, and more ; its literary workmanship is excellent, its scenic skill consummate.

“PETER THE GREAT”

For various reasons, as will presently appear, I find it exceedingly difficult to estimate the merits of *Peter the Great* in relation to the drama at large or to the ideal of historic tragedy. But as to its place among the historical or romantic plays of the modern English stage, there can surely be no room for doubt. It shows singular originality, intelligence, and vigour—singular, in the literal sense of the word. Mr. Laurence Irving has put all conventions behind him—Scribe-Sardou ingenuity, no less than pseudo-Elizabethan Otway-Knowles fustian. He has imitated neither Shakespeare nor Mr. Anthony Hope, neither Schiller nor Mr. Stanley Weyman. He has taken a tragic episode in history, has incidentally illustrated the conflict of ideas and manners upon which the action turns, but has concentrated his main effort, not upon plot, not upon spectacle, not even upon the illustration of manners, but upon the characterisation of the two leading personages, upon that soul-study to which we unfortunately give the pedantic and deterrent name of psychology. It is this effort which differentiates Mr. Irving's work from the ordinary costume-plays of the day, whether French or English. That so young a man should display absolute mastery in grappling with so difficult a theme was not to be expected. It is not mastery but talent that we look for in a first play (for so it may almost be called); and here we find not only talent but what is much rarer—individu-

ality. That gift seems to run in the Irving blood. For good or ill (artistically speaking) an Irving is always distinct from the common herd.

So much one can say with all confidence of *Peter the Great*; the rest must be tentative and provisional. For three reasons: First, because it is impossible to take in all the details of such a play at a single hearing; secondly, because my single hearing was so very imperfect that considerable portions of the dialogue might have been written and delivered in Russian for aught I could make of them; thirdly, because I am so ignorant of Russian history that I cannot tell where Mr. Irving is inventing and where he is merely following his documents. It seems pretty evident that he has been, on the whole, too anecdotic. The traits of manners are injudiciously accumulated, obscuring rather than elucidating spiritual states and processes. Mr. Irving has developed his historical picture to the detriment of his psychological tragedy. Now the tragedy is (and he himself evidently feels it to be) the thing of real worth and moment. For its sake he has, unless I am greatly mistaken, deliberately falsified, or at any rate simplified, history. What history suggested was a conflict between a father of strong intelligence, imperious will, and brutal manners, devoted body and soul to a titanic life-task, and a son of no intelligence at all, pusillanimous, vicious, superstitious, and congenitally incapable of appreciating, or even understanding, his father's character and aims. Here was a highly dramatic conflict, certainly, but far too sordid for the purposes of the stage or even of tragic poetry in the abstract. The crushing of a toad by a tiger is painful but not poetical. We must feel some sympathy with the victim, as distinct from mere contemptuous pity, before anything like tragic emotion arises. Therefore the character of Alexis had to be in some measure ennobled, and he became indolent, narrow-minded, shrinkingly supersensitive, but neither a debauchee nor a mere poltroon. It may perhaps be possible to make out an historical plea for this view of his character; but

as Mr. Irving has simplified the case by suppressing all mention of the Prince's marriage, we are justified in assuming that he has made other departures from history in the interests of his poetical design. It seems clear, as a matter of fact, that Mr. Irving has tampered not only with the toad, but with the tiger as well ; for Peter, in his habits as he lived, would not be presentable on any civilised stage. Since, then, the historical picture could not possibly pretend to accuracy, it should have been entirely subordinated to the necessities of the character-tragedy. The multitude of traits which illustrate Peter's rough humour, ferocity, callousness, and cynical common-sense should have been greatly reduced. This could have been done without in the least diminishing the grotesque impressiveness of his personality, or obscuring the grounds of the antipathy with which his son regards him. That is the essential fact in the case ; when once it has been thoroughly accounted for, all further traits of manner, however curious and authentic, become superfluous and make for monotony. I am far from suggesting that Mr. Irving should have given his work the abstract dignity of a classic tragedy ; I merely express the suspicion that he has overfilled with anecdotic detail the limited space at his command, and has thus crowded out some essential analysis of character. While we have a superabundance of gossip about Peter presented in action, we are left to divine and reconstruct the character of Alexis from very inadequate data.

A clear mistake—though this may seem superficially inconsistent with what I have just said—is the giving up of the whole third act to the purely romantic and inessential episode in the Castle of St. Elmo. Here and here only the play sinks to the level of the commonplace drama of intrigue. The act gives us no fresh insight into the Prince's character, and is in every sense unnecessary. A dozen words at the beginning of the trial-scene would have sufficed to tell us that the Czarewitch had fled the country and had been brought back by a judicious combination of

force and fraud. Again, I cannot think that Mr. Irving has done justice to the character of Catherine. Even if she was merely the rollicking Nell Gwynn or Madame Sans-Gêne whom we see at the Lyceum, she might at least have been assigned a more effective share in the action. In the passages between her and Euphrosyne at the beginning of the second act, I felt that Mr. Bernard Shaw had found a disciple, and that his spirit was represented on the Lyceum stage, though his “Man of Destiny” was not. But in the main Mr. Irving’s unconventionality is not of the Shaw type. He does not make his characters mere stalking-horses for his own wit and philosophy, but plants them firmly on their feet and lets them, so far as possible, think, feel, and act for themselves. He has a true and vivid historical imagination, and in all essentials his first two acts are strongly dramatic, while his last two acts, or rather scenes, are not only dramatic but poetically impressive. The long soliloquy in which Peter wrestles in spirit before signing his son’s death-warrant is, to my sense, a justified audacity. I am no lover of soliloquies in general, but it would be pedantry to apply to the historical drama, even when written in prose, the canons of a realistic technique. For Mr. Irving’s choice of prose as a medium one can have nothing but praise ; but I think his style would bear both condensation and chastening. Any affectation of archaism would of course be absurd, but there would be no harm in the avoidance of glaring modernisms and slang. It gives one a little shock to hear Peter the Great talk of “pottering around” and “having a good drunk.”



“GODEFROI AND YOLANDE”

IN one of Tennyson's last volumes there occurs a poem named “Happy”—the monologue of a wife whose husband has returned from the Crusades smitten with leprosy, and who determines to live and die with him. It is not on the level of the poet's best work, and has never been very popular ; but it contains three splendid stanzas :—

I loved you first when young and fair, but now I love you most ;
The fairest flesh at last is filth on which the worm will feast ;
This poor rib-grated dungeon of the holy human ghost,
This house with all its hateful needs no cleaner than the beast,

This coarse diseaseful creature which in Eden was divine,
This Satan-haunted ruin, this little city of sewers,
This wall of solid flesh that comes between your soul and mine,
Will vanish and give place to the beauty that endures,

The beauty that endures on the Spiritual height,
When we shall stand transfigured, like Christ on Hermon hill,
And moving each to music, soul in soul and light in light,
Shall flash thro' one another in a moment as we will.

In this poem and in these stanzas Mr. Laurence Irving seems to have found the germ¹ of his curious and interesting “Mediæval Play” entitled *Godefroi and Rolande*. The situation he presents is identical in substance, but the parts

¹ I ought, of course, to have known that Mr. Irving found his theme in a poem of Mr. Swinburne's. Still, Tennyson's stanzas may probably have contributed to his inspiration.

are reversed, and a new element is introduced to heighten at once the eeriness and the spiritual significance of the theme. What this new element is will presently appear.

The scene is a spacious hall in the Castle of Yolande. A snowstorm is raging outside ; within the preparations for a feast are going forward. But Yolande's handmaids are ill at ease. Their “beauteous lady” is ill ; she does nothing but sit in her chamber, holding her mirror in her hand.

“She does not want to, but she cannot keep from looking—this way—that !—she moves ; she shifts ; she calls. Turns she on me :—‘Am not I white ?’—And, whatsoever answer I may make, or ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ she all the same flies out.”

The youth Godefroi, her “scrivening clerk,” has gone forth in the snowstorm to find a doctor for her, and in his absence arrives Megarde, his old blind mother, led by his little sister Lisette. Hitherto we have taken Yolande (whom as yet we know only by hearsay) for the high-born chatelaine of this lordly abode. Its chatelaine she certainly is, but we now learn that she is nothing but a courtesan, a “king's courtesan,” what in later, but still antique, days was called a “dashing Cyprian.” This is the new element which Mr. Irving has imported into the theme : he has piled up the agony and complicated the moral problem. In due time Godefroi returns with the physician—a most uncanny medical man, not without a strain of the goblin in him, it would seem. He steps upstairs to visit his patient, and Godefroi is left alone with his mother. She begs him not to remain in the service of such a mistress, and is appalled when he confesses that he “loves one here.” “One of these—women ?” she asks. “One—*the* one !” he replies, “Yolande !—I love Yolande.” He sees, however, that his love is as hopeless as it is shameful, and consents to leave the castle next morning with his mother. Meanwhile the preparations are proceeding for the great

feast and masque. King Philippe le Bel and his brother the Archbishop are coming ; and Godefroi has written the text of the divertisement. The physician comes down from the lady's chamber, chuckling grimly and speaking in weird enigmas.

"DOCTOR. Like what does the snow fall? Come, Master Clerk, up here! Does it fall like a harsh, cold word? Does it fall like a kiss withheld?

"GODEFROI. Most like, most like!

"DOCTOR. Like what does it lie on the ground? Does it lie like a winding sheet? But, Master Clerk, one thing there is, one thing like which it falls, and lies liker than these, that is—that is—that is the leprosy."

To Yolande herself, who now appears, the leech is still less explicit, but equally bodeful ; and their colloquy is interrupted by the arrival, as we should now say, of the Royalties. Philippe appears in the guise of Jupiter, the Archbishop as Pluto ; Yolande (masked) and her damsels impersonate Venus and her nymphs ; and a crusader, Sir Sagramour, plays Hermes, whose duty it is to fasten a girdle round the waist of Venus, and then, kneeling, to kiss her hand. But as he is in the act of doing so he starts back in affright. An old campaigner in the Orient, he knows the symptoms of leprosy ; he looks up at her chin, appearing under her mask, and his suspicion is changed to certainty. As the King and Archbishop advance to salute her in their turn, he forcibly holds them off and makes known his direful discovery. Yolande is compelled to unmask, and appears before the terror-stricken court—a leper. All flee from her, leaving her rolling in agony among the rushes on the floor ; all—save Godefroi. He advances and holds out his hand to her. She takes his hand, "springs up from the ground and kisses him once, twice, and again." "It is not true!" she cries ; "I am not—you let me kiss you!" But he can only reply, "Lady,

alas, alas !” The remainder of the action is sufficiently foreshadowed in Tennyson’s stanzas. Godefroi had made up his mind to leave Yolande in her prosperity and splendour ; now, in her affliction, he will cling to her, sharing her sufferings and doubtless her disease. The leprosy is a visitation of God for the saving of her soul. Foulness of the flesh will bring purity of the spirit. “Perish thy body, so thy soul survive.” A “Frantic Hermit” and a company of “Demolishers” rush in to tear down the polluted castle, and cast its mistress forth to join the lepers at the gate. She assumes the gray garment and the bell, and goes forth with Godefroi into the night.

There is imagination, there is even dramatic power in this little tragedy. As the work of a beginner (for so Mr. Irving was when he wrote it), *Godefroi and Yolande* is truly remarkable. The ever-recurring echoes of Maeterlinck are nothing in its disfavour—the “faint, far, indistinguishable cry” of the opening scene, the blind mother, the lepers without clamouring for their fellow-leper, and a score of minor touches. It was not to be expected that a beginner in play-writing should show no trace of outward influence, and it speaks well for the quality of Mr. Irving’s imagination that it should have found its stimulus in Maeterlinck. Nor are the defects of construction either surprising or serious. Here, as in *Peter the Great*, Mr. Irving is very apt to sacrifice perspicuity to animation. At the beginning of both plays, for example, he keeps his minor characters restlessly flitting on and off the stage before we have realised who they are, and presents us with a great deal of bustle and movement before we have any idea what it is all about. Better the most formal exposition, to my thinking, than this bewildering hurry-scurry. This, however, is a trifling matter. Mr. Irving has time before him, and will soon learn to tell his story at once clearly and naturally. The only defect of the play which strikes one as really serious is the lack of literary finish in the dialogue. Of style, of verbal form, Mr. Irving has either the haziest

or the most perverse conception. His diction and even his syntax are of the oddest. In the Doctor's speech, quoted above, how are we to construe the amazing phrase, "One thing like which it falls, and lies liker than these"? By way of archaisms, doubtless, we have the strangest inversions:—

"There nothing will be ready.

"When next the moon runs out from 'neath that cloud, there some will be struck silly.

"Thy father poor he was, but he was proud.

"Shall not man follow in God's footsteps, when so clearly one is set aside as she for execration?"

Of diction, take the following samples:—

"YOLANDE. Thy will be done! Splotch me and spatter me! . . .

"THE FRANTIC HERMIT. Go through the house; smash, purge, destroy and purify."

The Frantic Hermit seems to justify his name all too well when he says, "Thy goods are given over to the King; thy bodies the leprosy; thy souls to Satan." These plurals can scarcely be mere misprints; and, if not, what *does* the Exasperated Anchorite mean? The brief fragments of the Masque which are spoken before the discovery give us but a poor opinion of Godefroi's literary powers; and altogether the style of the dialogue is painfully "splotchy and spattery," through here and there a pregnant or well-turned phrase stands out from its surroundings. Though printed as prose throughout, the greater part of the dialogue is really in blank verse. Sometimes we come upon so long a sequence of perfectly regular lines that it is impossible to suppose them fortuitous. Here, for instance, is Godefroi's speech to the Hermit:—

Thy message thou hast spoken; hear thou mine!
That there is love on earth we will show God;
We will show man that there is God in heaven.

That she might be acceptable to Him
 He made her first abhorrent unto men.
 He cast a seed of love into my heart ;
 And when that seed had grown up strong and stout
 (Strong to resist God's weather and man's hate),
 Then did this little thicket blossom forth ;
 And then God said : Go forth ! and testify
 To men before My face ! . . .
 Come forth, Yolande, into the night and wind !
 When we appear together at the last,
 Together He must judge us ! We are one !

The second and third lines of this tirade are really beautiful, and the whole passage is not without spirit. If Mr. Irving will take the trouble to master his medium—the English language—he may yet make his mark in dramatic literature.

“THE MEDICINE-MAN”

THE talent of Messrs. H. D. Traill and Robert S. Hichens, authors of *The Medicine-Man*, is not for a moment in question. Severally, they are, each in his way, very able and accomplished writers ; but collectively they do not as yet make a dramatist. There is plenty of clever writing in their “melodramatic comedy” ; but they have sought in the term “melodramatic” an excuse not only for shallowness of psychology, but for haziness of motivation, and extreme improbability of detail. The result is a play which at no point convinces us or carries us along. We are always either wondering or protesting. There is much that we don’t understand, and what we do understand we don’t believe in. It must be owned that the extreme slowness of the performance, inevitable (it would seem) at the Lyceum, did as much injustice to Messrs. Traill and Hichens as it does to Shakespeare. Furthermore, a great deal of the dialogue was totally inaudible to me, in the thirteenth row of the stalls ; and the fact that considerable portions of it were spoken twice over afforded but poor compensation. I would rather have heard all of it once than most of it twice. It is quite possible, then, that some of the points which seemed to me obscure or vague, are, in the text, clear and definite. If so, I can only beg the authors’ pardon, and assure them that I had the best will in the world both to hear and understand.

The vagueness of which I complain sets in at the very

starting-point of the action, twenty-five years before the curtain rises. Dr. Tregenna, we are told, loved a young lady named Helen (surname unknown), who blighted his life by marrying another gentleman. Tregenna considered himself exceedingly ill-used, and has for all these years cherished a fierce longing for revenge upon the man who supplanted him. So far good ; we are familiar with such absorbing passions, in melodrama. But even in melodrama we want to know something of the protagonist's character, to have some inkling as to whether, and how far, we can sympathise with him. Here we are left quite in the dark. Were there any reasonable grounds for Tregenna's resentment ? Or is he simply a malignant monomaniac ? No injury, to be sure, could make such inveterate vengefulness sympathetic ; but in order to judge whether it is in the least excusable, we ought to know something of the circumstances of the case. Then, again, how is it that for a quarter of a century he has banked down the fires of his vengeance ? Apparently he did not know the name or address of Helen's husband ; but what a remarkable, astounding circumstance ! Perhaps I am in error on this point ; but in any case the dilemma remains. For twenty-five years, he tells us, he has longed to plunge a knife into his rival's heart : if he knew where that heart was to be found, why did he let his vengeance lag so long ? if he did not know, why did he take no steps to find out ? What he does, as a matter of fact, is to solace his wounded spirit by becoming a physician, and preying upon society at large. “His great revenge has stomach for them all.” He keeps a sort of private madhouse or sanatorium at Hampstead, whither he lures epileptics and dipsomaniacs from the East End in order, it would seem, to subject them to a sort of psychical vivisection. “Science,” he says, “is merciless,” and we hear dark allusions to the horrors of “the Retreat.” But Dr. Tregenna's scientific researches and the cruelties by which he furthers them remain equally vague and incredible to us. We are told with bated breath

that his epileptics and dipsomaniacs seldom live more than three years after coming out of "the Retreat"; whence it would appear that his treatment is not permanently successful. But there is nothing diabolical in the inability to cure incurable diseases; and for the rest we have not the slightest evidence of his sinister practices. It is true that we find him using a dipsomaniac dock-labourer as his body-servant, and setting him to gather roses in the garden; but this is no such blood-curdling atrocity. In a word, Dr. Tregenna does not convince us of any of the characteristics verbally attributed to him. It is said, or rather darkly hinted, that he is a fiendish man of genius; judging by the evidence "subjected to our faithful eyes," we should rather take him for a benevolent bungler.

But the most amazing thing about this famous alienist of a quarter of a century's experience is that he has never had an opportunity of studying the gradual development of a case of insanity! "Oh for a patient," he cries, "that I could follow step by step along that gloomy path till we reach the actual border-line, the dim yet visible frontier beyond which insanity lies! All, all would be clear to me then. But that is the one case that I have never met with, which, perhaps, I never shall meet with—unless——" and the last word, I take it, indicates that if he cannot find such a case ready-made, he will be driven to manufacture one. Scarcely has he said this (to a brother doctor at an evening party), when it appears that the house he is in is that of Helen's husband, now Lord Belhurst, and that Helen's daughter, the Hon. Sylvia Wynford, having shown symptoms of mental trouble, is to be confided to his care! Here is his opportunity indeed—he can kill two birds with one stone, drive Sylvia mad in the interests of science, and thus plunge a metaphorical, but all the more deadly, dagger into Lord Belhurst's heart. The situation might be interesting if, in the first place, Tregenna's motives were clear, and if, in the second place, he had any difficulties to overcome, any occasion to assert his will.

As it is, the mingling of motives makes him less, instead of more, comprehensible. We could, at a pinch, conceive that he should desire, out of revenge, to drive Sylvia into a madhouse. It would be a very odd and very crazy idea to revenge a wrong, done twenty-five years ago, upon a person entirely innocent of that wrong, and the living reproduction, moreover, of the woman he so passionately adored. Still, nothing is impossible either to nature or to the skilled playwright. Such morbid perversions of feeling may conceivably occur, and an adept at his art might conceivably be able to interest us in the study of such a case. Then, again, the insensate craving of the vivisector for a “subject” might be rendered credible and interesting, if the dramatist knew how to make us feel and realise his hero’s fanaticism for the Moloch of science. On one or other of these two lines Tregenna’s conduct might have been accounted for; the attempt to account for it on both together left us entirely unconvinced by either. “But human motives *are* mixed,” the authors may reply, “and the complex cases are the interesting ones.” Yes, motives are mixed, and one motive is often alleged, even in a man’s own consciousness, while in reality another motive dominates his action. But Tregenna’s case is not one of mixed motives, but rather of mixed madresses; and it is never for a moment clear to us which of them is dominant either in his own consciousness or in reality. Furthermore, his course is made so absurdly easy for him that we have no sense of effort, of the exertion of will, in a word, of drama. Lord Belhurst simply throws his daughter into the enemy’s toils. This fond father, who has never set eyes on Tregenna, and knows him only by a somewhat mixed reputation, accepts without a moment’s misgiving, and without inquiring into a single detail, Tregenna’s gloomy diagnosis of Sylvia’s case (founded on three minutes’ conversation in a ballroom) and implores him to take her into his “Retreat.” The whole negotiation is conducted and concluded in a dozen hasty speeches. Do

the authors really conceive that doting parents play with sanity and insanity, with life and death, in this offhand fashion? Again, we are left in utter doubt as to Sylvia's actual state. At the end of the play, Tregenna declares her to be, and to have been all along, perfectly sane. We are to conclude, then, that her apparent insanity resulted entirely from his hypnotic suggestion. But that is not at all what we gather in the second act. Her mother's madness (I forgot to mention that Helen died insane) is strongly insisted on, and her own words and actions tend to make us feel that it does not much matter whether she goes to Tregenna's "Retreat" or another, for to some such seclusion her steps are inevitably bent. By leaving us in doubt, or rather misleading us, as to Sylvia's mental state, the authors deprive their situation of half its strength. Clearly the fiendish Tregenna (whether his fiendishness be personal or scientific) ought to swoop down upon a serene and happy household, dreaming of no danger. He ought, by sheer diabolical adroitness and force of will, to carry off his prize, as it were, from under the guns of the batteries. It needs no adroitness, no volition, no magnetism, to confirm the fears of an already panic-stricken father and a nervous, overwrought, sleepless daughter. We are but moderately thrilled by Tregenna's ruthlessness while we feel (as we cannot help feeling) that the worst he can do is to accelerate a seemingly inevitable catastrophe.

This uncertainty as to Sylvia's condition saps our interest in the subsequent acts as well. It is melancholy, no doubt, to see a young woman going mad, and surrendering herself to the care of a physician who does not really wish her well. But we do not for a moment feel that it is any occult power in Tregenna that is driving her mad. Take, for example, the incident which closes the third act. We are told, very maladroitly, that Sylvia's mother, in her days of affliction, used to sit pulling the petals off roses and scattering them around. Hearing this, Tregenna sends his dipsomaniac valet to gather a bouquet of roses, and gives

them to Sylvia, who, as the curtain falls, proceeds vaguely to tear off the petals. We take this—we cannot help taking it—for a symptom, romantic but conceivable, of hereditary disease. In that light it is painful enough, but we do not feel it to be induced by Tregenna, and therefore it is not dramatic. We are subsequently asked to believe that it is entirely induced by Tregenna; in which case it becomes a mere experiment in hypnotism. Such an experiment might be dramatic if we had been given clearly to understand that it tended to undermine the sanity of the patient; but as we understand nothing at all about it, the incident remains utterly vague and ineffective. In the fourth act there is no perceptible progress. Tregenna tries to estrange Sylvia from her father, not by hypnotism, but by the simple and inexpensive process of telling lies about him. (At least we presume them to be lies; we don't know; the trouble is throughout that we don't know anything of what we ought to know.) He succeeds in bringing on a crisis of nerves, and this crisis leads (in the fifth act) to the revelation that Lord Belhurst was totally unconscious of having supplanted Tregenna in Helen's affection. That lamented lady had omitted to mention to her husband that she had been engaged (had she been engaged? we don't know) to another man before she met him. On hearing this, Tregenna feels a holy calm descend upon his soul. His thirst for vengeance is suddenly quenched; he withdraws the dagger from his rival's heart, frees Sylvia from her bondage to his glittering eye, and dismisses her with a certificate of sanity. Then his pet drunkard comes along and throttles him. Why? we ask in amazement. “Because he is a homicidal maniac,” the authors reply. If that is the whole reason, the end is an irrelevant accident. Surely the authors intend that there should be some retributive justice, or at any rate some sort of moral significance, in the event; but I am at a loss to discover it. Tregenna had not “vivisected” Burge. He had ordered him about a little and made him gather roses, an occupation

which Burge no doubt felt to be degrading ; but I cannot see that Burge had any ground of resentment for which Tregenna could rationally be held responsible. Perhaps we are to understand that Burge was merely avenging the general atrocities committed in the "Retreat" ; but as we have had no evidence whatever of these atrocities, we do not believe in them for a moment. Is it possible that Tregenna, in his secret soul, intended Burge to exercise his homicidal mania upon Sylvia, and is thus hoist with his own petard ? If so, he certainly kept the design in his secret soul. The only lesson, in fine, that I can gather from the catastrophe is that the "Retreat" was a singularly badly managed private asylum, and that alienist physicians ought not to have trophies of arms hanging on their walls, within easy reach of their patients.

Dr. Tregenna ought to be the very part for Sir Henry Irving, and indeed he looks highly picturesque in it, and plays it with that sort of angular grace and distinction which always charms us when he appears in modern dress. But he never seemed to me less magnetic than in this part, which ought to be of magnetism all compact. Miss Ellen Terry plays Sylvia with a great deal of charm, but does nothing to correct the vagueness which is the prevailing defect of the character.

“THE AMBASSADOR”

I



IF *The Ambassador* is really a first play, it is a marvel. It is uncannily, almost disquietingly, good. One instinctively pays the authoress the undesirable compliment of wondering whether she can ever do as well again. When a new writer produces a work in which talent struggles with inexperience, criticism is quite happy and at its ease. It can be paternally indulgent; it can chasten while it applauds; it is the right thing in the right place, and feels that it has a beneficent and altogether superior part to play in the economy of the universe. But when the new talent shows no trace of inexperience, and calls for definition rather than correction, criticism is disconcerted. It resents the secondary rôle assigned it, and flies to the theory of a miraculous chance in order to account for this inconsiderate precocity, so to speak, on the part of the author. “No doubt it is only a happy hit,” we say to ourselves, “and will never be repeated. ‘John Oliver Hobbes’ has put all she knows into this one effort. It happens to have ‘come off’; but is there any staying power behind it?” There is no real validity in such reasoning. Some people are born with the knack of the stage; some people laboriously acquire it; most people (nowadays) laboriously fail to acquire it. *The Ambassador* proves that Mrs. Craigie belongs to the first of these

classes. She has in an eminent degree the knack, the instinct, of the scene. I can think of only one other first play (acted on these very boards too) which gave such unmistakable evidence of that gift. The knack of the stage, however, is not everything. There goes a great deal more than that to the making of a dramatist. Mrs. Craigie has one thing more—she has wit. She has another thing more—she has knowledge of society. Out of these ingredients an airy comedy of dialogue like *The Ambassador* can readily be whipped up; and a delightful dish it is. But still further gifts are required if Mrs. Craigie is to give variety and substance to her dramatic production. We cannot live on trifle alone, or even on alternate courses of trifle and tipsy-cake. A second *Ambassador* would be palatable enough; a third would begin to pall on us; we should lose the flavour in thinking of the too familiar recipe. Has Mrs. Craigie, in addition to the three gifts aforesaid, the supreme qualities of the dramatic artist? Has she fertility of invention? Has she sincerity of feeling? Has she not only knowledge of society but knowledge of life? Can she, on occasion, cease to be clever and think only of being true? I hope so with all my heart; for we have ample room for another dramatist.

In the meantime, without “seeking to proticipate,” let us try to do justice to the very real merits of the work Mrs. Craigie has actually done. What chiefly pleases me in *The Ambassador* is the straightforward ease and simplicity of its technique, and the delicate tact with which the tone of comedy is preserved throughout. It is evident that the dramatic form comes natural to Mrs. Craigie. She has not troubled her head with theories or canons, orthodoxies or heresies. *The Ambassador* is neither a well-made nor an ill-made play; it is a story told without strain or pose by a writer who has a strong inborn sense of the effects attainable in the modern dramatic form. Most would-be playwrights, who have any conception at all of dramatic effect, are apt to be hampered by an exaggerated reverence

for the mysteries of “construction.” Having no natural gift for bringing the incidents of their story within the framework of the stage, they take refuge in imitating all the outworn shifts and devices they can, consciously or unconsciously, call to mind, and think they have been vastly ingenious when they have only been helplessly conventional. Mrs. Craigie, on the other hand, lets her story develop easily and freely, not troubling herself about rules or prescriptions, but simply studying and realising for herself the conditions, opportunities, and limitations of the complex instrument she has to play on—a company of actors manœuvring on the “scanty plot of ground” of the modern stage. Her instinct tells her what her audience should be allowed to know or divine at any given moment, and what they should be made to feel or to hope. I do not mean that she does everything with the dexterity of the accomplished craftsman, but rather that she allows her leisurely action to move with an unforced rhythm that strikes us as neither dexterous nor clumsy, but simply natural. For instance, she feels it imperative that we should from the outset be quite clear as to her heroine’s character and position. How is that end to be attained? Why, in the simplest way in the world. The curtain rises upon a conversation between Juliet Gainsborough and her sister, a nun, which, without the least strain, puts us in possession of all we want to know. The word “confidant” has no terrors for Mrs. Craigie. It is perfectly natural that Juliet should make a confidant of her elder sister, and that the sister should then return to her nunnery and be seen no more. I have not, personally, any passion for confidants. My own taste is rather for the stricter constructive formula—for the rigid economy which allows of the introduction of no character who is not an essential factor in the drama. But that is only to say that social comedy is not my dramatic ideal. I do not therefore deny its right to exist, or complain because it does not obey the laws of a tenser, more concentrated form of art. The law of social comedy,

as Mrs. Craigie has quite justly divined, is comprehensive rather than concentration. The larger and more animated the picture it presents, the better ; nothing is inadmissible that comes probably and characteristically within the picture ; and what could be more in the picture than this little opening scene, which at the same time serves its dramatic purpose to perfection ? This is only one instance of the absence of technical effort or pedantry—the graceful and justified audacity one might almost call it—which charms us throughout the play.

X The second characteristic of *The Ambassador* which specially pleases me is its pleasantness—in other words, the delicate artistic feeling with which Mrs. Craigie has kept her whole play in the key of comedy. We are interested throughout in the fate of her leading personages, but we never have a moment's painful uneasiness concerning them. The whole play is steeped in an April atmosphere of sunshine, scarcely dimmed by transient and iridescent showers. It would have been very easy to order the thing otherwise and make a drama of the comedy ; but Mrs. Craigie, I think, felt—though she may not so have phrased it to herself—that her characters were not large enough or deep enough to show to advantage under even the passing threat of a tragic destiny. If, for instance, Juliet had not fortunately written and despatched her letter of dismissal to Sir William before she met Lord St. Orbyn, her position would have been exceedingly equivocal and painful. But from the first scene onwards we know that the letter is in the post and Juliet is safe. Mrs. Craigie disdains even to extract from its delay a momentary effect of vulgar and humiliating suspicion. Her art is strong enough to preserve our interest in her characters, though we know that Fate is all the time on their side, and working—as, after all, it occasionally does work—for happiness. We are spared even the pain of feeling that in loving the right man Juliet cruelly disappoints the wrong man. The unsympathetic people are left with a fair chance of being happy in their

own unsympathetic way ; and for my part I congratulate them. I am in a comedy humour and feel kindly even towards the prig and the minx. I am anxious that nothing should jar upon my sense of comedy, and the authoress anticipates my desire. The disappointment of Lady Beauvedere is only the little dash of bitter without which the draught would be insipid. But it is especially in the incident of the cheque and all that springs from it that Mrs. Craigie’s artistic determination to keep to the key of comedy is manifest. By making Lady Beauvedere and Juliet act like women of common sense and good feeling, instead of indulging in stagey heroics, she instantly resolves in harmony the disagreeable discord of their encounter at Major Lascelles’s. But still we half dread a painful and melodramatic development from the fact that St. Orbyn, too, has seen Juliet enter the Major’s room. I shall not take the edge off the reader’s pleasure in seeing the scene by relating how the misunderstanding is averted. The device (which is really no device at all, but only a touch of nature and good sense) is delightfully effective and dramatic. Mr. Alexander and Mr. Fred Terry, let me remark, treated the passage most skilfully ; and I shall not soon forget the sense of relief I felt when St. Orbyn jumped up with the cry, “Ah, I knew it ! I knew it all along !” The relief was twofold—on behalf of Juliet and on behalf of Mrs. Craigie. The authoress, no less than her heroine, had escaped an imminent danger. Nay more—by eschewing stageyness she had achieved a fine dramatic effect.

A remark I have made above may seem to imply disparagement of the dialogue. It was not so intended. The dialogue is, on the whole, excellent ; I only meant that we must not expect to find among its qualities the straightforward ease which appeared so noteworthy in the construction. Wit is an obligatory element in social comedy—perhaps the chief element—and Mrs. Craigie’s wit is generally of the best. Here and there she strains a little too obviously after fanciful ornament or verbal glitter.

The play would be improved by the excision of some lines which are far below her best level. She is fertile enough of happy inspirations to be able to dispense with her failures. There is not merely glitter in her wit, but, on occasion, real tenderness and charm. And better than all the verbal wit—more indicative, at any rate, of the born playwright—are the passages of dramatic irony where the epigram, so to speak, lies not in the words, but in the situation.

II

MR. FISHER UNWIN sends me, in a pretty little volume, that delightful comedy, *The Ambassador*, which brought the St. James's season to a brilliant close, and with which Mr. Alexander proposes, I believe, to reopen the theatre. The play reads capitally. Its extraordinary scenic adroitness is best appreciated, no doubt, on the stage; but its wit, grace, and distinction of style stand the test of cold-blooded scrutiny in the study. There is only one thing that a little alarms me about it—the preface with which Mrs. Craigie ushers it in. Not that the theories which she somewhat oracularly sets forth are in themselves alarming; but it seems a pity that she should dabble in theories at all. “An ounce o’ mother-wit,” says the Scotch proverb, “is worth a pound o’ lear” (learning); and in play-writing an ounce of instinct is worth a hundredweight of science. Mrs. Craigie has instinct in plenty; I adjure her not to warp and hamper it with ratiocination. Though her aphorisms are true enough—as true as aphorisms can be, or, in other words, about half-true—there is an air of self-consciousness about them that is not reassuring. The preface begins: “Once I found a speech in prose—prose so subtly balanced, harmonious, and interesting that it seemed, on paper, a song. But no actor or actress, though they spoke with the voice of angels,

could make it, on the stage, even tolerable.” It is not difficult to find such a speech. Give me a volume of Pater or of Renan, and I will find a dozen in as many minutes. There is no doubt whatever that the merits of dramatic prose are not the same as the merits of historical, expository, or reflective prose, or even the prose of philosophic dialogues. This truth is too self-evident to be worth stating ; and when a writer like Mrs. Craigie, who is not usually enamoured of the obvious, takes the trouble of throwing it into relief, one cannot but suspect her of drawing exaggerated deductions from it—as, for instance, that beauty is incompatible with dramatic truth. True, she does not explicitly commit herself to this inference, but goes on to find in “emotion” the test of dramatic quality in any given utterance : “Stage dialogue may have or may not have many qualities, but it must be emotional.” Here, again, we have a statement which is true in a vague and general sense, untrue in the definite and particular sense in which alone it could afford any practical guidance. “My lord, the carriage waits,” may be, in its right place, a highly dramatic speech, even though it be uttered with no emotion, and arouse no emotion in the person addressed. What Mrs. Craigie means, I take it, is that, to be really dramatic, every speech must have some bearing, direct or indirect, prospective, present, or retrospective, upon individual human destinies. The dull play, the dull scene, the dull speech, is that in which we do not perceive this connection ; but when once we are interested in the individuals concerned, we are so quick to perceive the connection, even though it be exceedingly distant and indirect, that the dramatist who should always hold the fear of Mrs. Craigie’s aphorism consciously before his eyes would quite unnecessarily fetter and restrict himself. Even the driest scientific proposition may, under special circumstances, become electrical with drama. The statement that the earth moves round the sun does not, in itself, stir our pulses ; yet what playwright has ever invented a more

dramatic utterance than Galileo's "E pur si muove!"? It would not take much ingenuity to devise a situation in which the axiom that "Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another" should become thrillingly dramatic. In all this, to be sure, I am illustrating, not confuting, Mrs. Craigie's maxim. I have no wish to confute it, for, in the largest interpretation, it is true; but I suggest that it is true only when attenuated almost beyond recognition, and quite beyond the point at which it can be of any practical help to the practical dramatist. He must rely on his instinct, not numb and bewilder it by constantly subjecting it to the dictates of hard-and-fast æsthetic theory.

What renders me specially distrustful of the theorisings of dramatists is the fact that, by some untoward psychical necessity, they almost always theorise *down* instead of *up*. They are fertile in reasons for doing something else and something less than the best that it is in them. I do not say that this is Mrs. Craigie's case. She gives her maxims no personal application, but leaves them to stand on their own merits, dogmas pure and simple, much as Mr. F.'s Aunt asserted the existence of milestones on the Dover road. Yet I cannot but suspect that in laying down these theses she is making a sort of anticipatory confession, and nerving herself, so to speak, for compromise with her artistic ideal. It is ominous, to say the least of it, when a playwright begins, without any apparent provocation, to moralise in this strain: "The theatre is a place of relaxation. When the majority of pleasure-seekers find a piece tedious, it is a failure beyond question as a play." Then is *The Ambassador* a failure beyond question. The majority of pleasure-seekers—even of people who are accustomed to seek their pleasures in theatrical entertainments—would undoubtedly find it bore them to extinction. The majority of pleasure-seekers are careful to give it a wide berth, while they crowd to the music-halls and to music-hall plays. A play which attracts "the majority" runs for a year at least—perhaps for three or four years—and it would be folly

to predict for *The Ambassador* any such career as that. Of course, Mrs. Craigie will say that I am wilfully misinterpreting her; that she must be understood to mean the majority of a certain class of pleasure-seekers. In other words, she means the majority of a minority—the rather small minority of culture and intelligence somewhat similar to her own, which she instinctively addresses. Well, that is precisely the point at which I am aiming: Mrs. Craigie deceives herself if she imagines that she has anything to do with “the majority of pleasure-seekers,” and she will debase her talent to no purpose if she gives a moment’s thought to their supposed requirements. Tolstoï notwithstanding, and a few doubtful exceptions apart, all the tolerable art in the world is minority art. It is the artist’s business to find the right minority—an audience fit and relatively few, though, as the fortune of *The Ambassador* shows, positively very numerous—and having found it, to lead it, gently but firmly, not downwards to the depths, but upwards to the heights. Thanks to a natural aptitude which verges on the preternatural, Mrs. Craigie has, at her first attempt, caught the accent of the scene and found the ear of her predestined minority. Let her, then, study life and her own soul, and obey the promptings of the born artist within her, leaving to its own devices a “majority” whose thoughts she cannot think and whose tongue she cannot speak. Rules and canons, theories and generalisations, are for us poor devils of critics, who have to docket and classify because we cannot create. Criticism has its uses, no doubt, but I am not sure that its highest function is not to accord unreasoned and unstinted applause to the genius which seeks the bubble reputation even in the canons’—teeth. No artist, at any rate, ever achieved greatness by doing homage to the theories even of the greatest critics. We do not owe the masterpieces of tragedy to Aristotle any more than we owe the glories of the flower-garden to Linnæus. Ten years hence, when she has written ten plays as good as *The Ambassador*, and

better, we shall listen with interest to Mrs. Craigie's observations upon the processes of her art. In the meantime, let her divest her mind of preconceived theory and give free course to her eminently human, delicate, and delightful instinct. For example, she need not be in the least afraid of writing too good prose for the stage. Her instinct will tell her, more imperatively than any theory, that she must not make her characters speak with the tongue of Pater or of Ruskin; but that is no reason why she should not seek and find beautiful rhythms for their utterances. Shakespeare, we may be sure, troubled little enough about the manner of prose it behoved him to adopt, and was at no pains to avoid the cadences of Hooker or Bacon. He wrote as the spirit moved him, and in doing so gave Hamlet, in his great speech to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, one of the most magnificent, and at the same time most dramatic, pieces of prose in all literature.

Was *The Ambassador*, I wonder, originally written in five acts? A speech of Juliet's on p. 55 seems to suggest that two acts have been run together to form the present first act. She says, "I suppose Bill would not get any letter that was posted yesterday?" when as a matter of fact she has posted that very afternoon the letter which she has in her mind. Did the fortune-telling scene bring the original first act to a close? There is another slip as to time further on. St. Orbyn, on p. 65, says that he has known Juliet only five days, and then on p. 143 (the same evening) he says he met her ten days ago. If this occurred in Shakespeare, the commentators would fly to some theory of "accelerated" and "retarded" time to account for it, and would discover a deep significance in the discrepancies.

May I hint to Mrs. Craigie that instead of cumbering her mind with theory, she would do well to dismiss from her practice such conventional trivialities as this:—

"PRINCESS VENDRAMINI. Will you never regard me seriously?"

“The Ambassador”

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“ST. ORBYN. I can’t.

“PRINCESS. Why not?

“ST. ORBYN. Because you make me sad, and I’m only serious——

“PRINCESS. When?

“ST. ORBYN. When I’m joking.”

Time was when this sort of thing was thought rather clever; but

Most can raise the flower now,
For all have got the seed;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

“THE TERMAGANT”

IN *The Termagant*, at Her Majesty's Theatre, Messrs. Parker and Carson have made a creditable effort in the direction of poetical tragi-comedy, but have not, I think, quite realised the ideal of the form at which they seem to have aimed. The play reminds us in its conception of Alfred de Musset, but in its execution rather of Sheridan Knowles, or, if that seem too harsh a comparison, let us say of W. G. Wills. The “Termagant” is a lady of high degree, good-hearted, but wilful and spoilt, who finds an outlet in extravagant caprices for the restlessness with which (all unconsciously) she awaits the coming of love. When love does come, it comes “as suddenly as sudden death”; but with it come misunderstanding, jealousy, and hasty resentment; and her lover is killed by a dastardly rival before their passion is a day old. The main elements of this theme are familiar enough. In itself it possesses no great ingenuity or interest; everything must depend upon the way in which it is treated. The treatment accorded it by Messrs. Parker and Carson is, I think, a little heavy-handed. There is a great deal of somewhat commonplace padding in the play—the three subordinate pairs of lovers, the Court of Love, the benevolent padre, the comic servant, or *gracioso* as he would be called in Spain—and when we come to the drama proper, we do not find it either very moving or very significant. It might have been entitled (with apologies to Shakespeare and Heywood) *The Shrew*

Tamed by Kindness; and there is no reason why the contest between an amiable Petruchio and a sentimental Katharine should not have made a charming poetic comedy. As it is, the authors turn it (quite unnecessarily, as it seems to me) into a tragedy; and even in the comedy scenes the charm, though not wholly absent, is somewhat less than enthralling. The defect of the play as a whole is typified in miniature in the scene where Roderigo recounts the voyage of Columbus. The listeners on the stage are all spellbound by his story, and we feel that the authors have aimed at a poetic effect which, intellectually, we understand and admire. But, simply as a matter of experience, the effect does not come off. We, in the auditorium, are not in the least spellbound, and cannot understand why Roderigo's audience on the stage should hang upon his lips. Somehow or other the authors have just failed to give his narrative the necessary touch of fascination. Where the fault lies—whether in diction, or in matter, or in both together—I cannot tell. The missing quality is indefinable, but its absence is only too patent. Instead of sympathising with the spellbound group upon the stage, we know that they are only shamming enthrallment, and feel that their shamming is overdone. And what is true of this scene is true (more or less) of the whole play. We miss throughout the “little more, and how much it is!” The situations are not quite new enough, the psychology not quite true enough, the diction not quite exquisite enough, and the moral justification of the catastrophe not quite clear enough. Are we to understand that Roderigo's death is the punishment of Beatrix's doubt? In that case one can only say, in the first place, that it seems an exorbitant punishment for an excusable misunderstanding; in the second place, that Garcia was almost bound to assassinate Roderigo without any mandate, or pretence of a mandate, from Beatrix. If, on the other hand, Roderigo's death is not intended to have any moral significance at all, but is simply contrived for the sake of a

picturesquely funereal last act, I think the authors have committed a plain artistic error. Death, as a matter of fact, does not always wait for the moral or the psychological moment before making its appearance on the stage of life. A purely accidental death, or one arising like Roderigo's, from mere brute villainy, may have its place in realistic drama. But such a fantasy as *The Termagant* is nothing if not moral. Having once posited character and circumstance, the authors are bound by the rules of the game to deduce the action logically and significantly from the interplay of these elements. They must not drag in an irrelevant accident for the sake of a mere effect of picturesqueness; or if they do, it is at their peril. I do not really think that Messrs. Parker and Carson intended to make this mistake. I believe they regarded Roderigo's death as essential to the moral scheme of their play, if I may call it so, and springing somehow from a defect in the character of Beatrix. In that case, their intention, I think, was artistically right—but they ought not to have left it doubtful.

Of the acting I scarcely know how to write, it seems to me so radically mistaken from first to last. The curtain had not been up three minutes when three young ladies came skipping and gambolling upon the stage, followed by three young men; and all six, but especially the ladies, proceeded to comport themselves with an elaborate and studied unnaturalness, wonderful to behold. Their eyes, their lips, their arms, their bodies, were never for a moment at rest. They pranced and caracoled around, emphasising every word they uttered with arch glances, undulant movements, and flexuous gestures. Such a carnival of artificiality is seldom to be seen on the European stage. I rubbed my eyes and wondered whether I had strayed by mistake into a Chinese theatre. It was quite evident that all three ladies could not have been independently, as it were, smitten with this mania of affectation. They must have been carefully and laboriously stage-managed into it

—by whom? I looked at the playbill and read: “The play produced by Mr. Hugh Moss, under the direction of Miss Olga Nethersole.” At that moment the Princess Beatrix of Moya herself, in the person of Miss Nethersole, made her buoyant and breezy entrance; and before the “Termagant” had spoken half a dozen lines, I knew only too well where the ladies of her court had learnt their nods and becks and wreathèd smiles, their poses and their calisthenics. Miss Nethersole has in process of time developed a theory of art so fundamentally different from mine, that I feel discussion to be hopeless. To her, it would appear, art in general means the negation of nature, and acting in particular means resolute, indefatigable, systematic affectation. One other English-speaking actress—Mrs. Brown Potter—shares Miss Nethersole’s theory and emulates her practice. Perhaps there is something to be said for the theory; in Chinese æsthetics, I understand, it holds the field. The only European artist of distinction who gives it any countenance is Sarah Bernhardt—a great actress, no doubt, but great in spite of her tricks and mannerisms, not in virtue of them. It is the flaws in Madame Bernhardt’s method that Miss Nethersole seizes upon and exaggerates; and she thereby commands the applause of certain critics and a certain public. Even I can respect the ingenuity, the labour, the enthusiasm which she puts into her work; but alas! I cannot admire or take pleasure in the result.

“THE JEST”

WITH all respect, with all sympathy, with all regret, it must be said that Messrs. Parker and Carson have made a mistake in centring their recent efforts upon tragic romance. This is, to me, a genuinely painful admission. Despite a host of apparently insuperable obstacles, a living modern drama is struggling into existence in England. The struggle is hard, against the indifference of the higher public, the vulgarity of the lower public, and the timidity or stupidity of so many managers. Still, it goes ahead. An impulse, an aspiration, is abroad, which the most hostile conditions cannot entirely crush; and my sympathies are ardently engaged, I need scarcely say, on the side of original artistic effort, as opposed to facile paste-and-scissor work and cynical craze-exploiting. It is with no light heart, then, that one has to admit the misdirection of an original artistic effort on the part of two able and ambitious authors, liberally seconded by an influential actor-manager. It would be a hundred times pleasanter to cry, “Well done our side!” and proclaim a signal victory for dramatic literature. But the lying bulletin is the last resource of despair; and certainly we have not got that length yet. The only thing to do is to applaud the good intentions of Messrs. Parker and Carson, while admitting that they have in this case led to defeat. It is quite possible, of course, that the personal prestige of Mr. Charles Wyndham may secure a certain amount of

acceptance for *The Jest*; but it remains an artistic error none the less.

In all respects, except in being written throughout in prose, *The Jest* is a companion-piece to *The Termagant*. The same atmosphere prevails in it, the same tone of sentiment runs through it. The later piece proves, what the earlier piece led one to suspect, that in essaying tragic romance the authors are reaching forth beyond their intellectual range. They are not quite original enough psychologists, they are not quite good enough poets, to enter the lists with Alfred de Musset. “What!” they may say, “are we to be utterly condemned because we fall short of an arbitrary standard of perfection!” Utterly, no; but what I would urge them to realise is that in this class of work mediocrity is intolerable. A dramatic romance, especially if it assume a tragic tone, must be exquisite or it is naught. It is a direct appeal to our sense of pure beauty, and unless that sense is satisfied, the thing remains merely abortive. Now in *The Jest*, amid much ability, there is no sustained distinction of style, no subtlety of analysis, no sense of inevitableness in the march of the action. The authors are for ever straining after poetry of conception and expression, never quite reaching it. They lack that magical quality, whether of invention or of style which alone can justify so lavish an employment of the Brummagen trappings of romance.

Their story has two faults—it is far from clear, and if it were as clear as daylight, it would scarcely be interesting. They deliberately, or so it would appear, throw us off the scent of the real theme in arranging that Cosmo, in the first act, shall take the credit of Cesare’s bravery, and shall be found out, in the second, rather basely benefiting by Cesare’s magnanimity. What is here suggested is the Siegfried-Günther-Brünnhild situation—the hero who, in careless good nature, allows a meaner man to put on the “giant’s robe” of his heroism, and so to cheat a woman of her love. This is one of the great tragic situations of the

world ; Wagner has used it and Ibsen has used it ; still, there is no reason why Messrs. Parker and Carson should not do likewise, if they have the strength and the daring to follow in such footsteps. But after "laying great bases" for a tragedy on the Nibelungen lines, they go and construct a totally different tragedy, making their elaborate groundwork of magnanimous mendacity not only useless but misleading. Their Brünnhild, instead of marrying Günther because she credits him with the heroism of Siegfried, marries Siegfried in a fit of pique, and is utterly devoted to Günther all the time ! If this is to be the way of it, why set up the Siegfried-Günther relation at all ? What purpose does it serve, except to lead us astray ? I never in my life was so amazed as when, at the end of the second act, Fiorella promised to marry Cesare. The play seemed to me to be over, with two acts to come. All through the second act Fiorella had been finding Cosmo out. She had chidden him for his ungentleness to the mad minstrel ; she had caught him accepting an act of magnanimous self-effacement at Cesare's hands ; and finally, he had insulted her brutally and unpardonably. I did not doubt that, though still in the dark as to the identity of her heroic rescuer, she had taken a genuine and justified dislike to Cosmo, and transferred her affections to Cesare. Thus the tragedy seemed to have been eluded, by the dismissal of Günther-Cosmo, and I could not think where the remaining two acts were to come from. "How can you suppose," the authors may say, "that so angelic a personage as our heroine could, in the space of a single act, transfer her love from one man to another ?" Such instantaneous changes of heart are peculiar to the stage, I grant ; but I submit that what Fiorella actually does, according to the authors—namely, give herself to Cesare without loving him—is a far greater stain upon her character than the most miraculously sudden change of heart could be. We can quite well conceive that she should cease to care for Cosmo and come to love Cesare,

and are ready to accept the rapidity of the process as one of those conventional time-compressions so often necessary on the stage. We can also conceive at a pinch that she should marry Cesare, knowing that she loves Cosmo ; but we can discern no adequate reason for her doing so, and the idea disgusts us.

Be this as it may, the introduction of what I have called the Siegfried-Günther motive—Cosmo’s acceptance of the admiration and gratitude in reality due to Cesare—remains totally unexplained. Up to the very last, I expected the revelation of the truth to have some determining effect upon the action ; but it has none whatever. It is a fallacious finger-post directing our attention and expectation into a blind alley, in which we grope about through two whole acts. That is why I say the story is not clear.

And if it were clear, it would not be interesting, for reasons which I shall try to set forth. Instead of studying a particular case of unconquerable passion, and making it real, palpable, indubitable to us, the authors have made their action turn upon a general rule of amatory psychology, which is not a rule at all, but a sentimental absurdity. If they had convinced us, in the second act, of Fiorella’s overpowering love for Cosmo, and then given her some plausible reason for marrying Cesare in spite of it, the tragedy would have been old as the hills, indeed, but of perennial interest. It would have hinged upon Fiorella’s passionate character, absorbed in a great, overmastering desire. But as a matter of fact Fiorella has no character at all that we can discover. She is an ideal doll-heroine, with no blood in her porcelain composition. Throughout the second act, instead of showing us that Fiorella is fatally, dæmonically devoted to Cosmo, the authors do their best to make us feel that she is rapidly outgrowing her passing fancy for him. Then, when the third act brings us face to face with the situation towards which (by what roundabout paths !) they have actually been working,

they have to base it, not on this particular woman's passion for this particular man, but on a general rule, fitly enunciated by a lunatic, that "you cannot kill love," and that no woman, having once loved or fancied she loved one man, can ever learn to love another ! This flagrant sentimental falsehood is the ever-recurring burden of the last two acts. The lunatic on one side, and the nun on the other, din it into Cesare's ears, and he accepts it, and acts upon it, as gospel. The authors, I suppose, regard the idea as poetic ; but it is not the function of poetry to fly in the face of everyday observation and experience. The nun and the "innocent" are either talking sheer nonsense, or else arguing in a circle and confining the name of "love" to that all-absorbing passion which, having once taken root in a heart, can never wither or make way for any other emotion. I should be very sorry to assert that such love as this—ideal love if you choose to call it so—does not exist. On the contrary, I am quite willing to conceive that Fiorella's passion for Cosmo might be of this nature. But the authors never convince me of the fact, and do not even make any reasonable attempt to convince me. Instead of vividly presenting Fiorella's individual case, they ask me to take it on trust, as an example of a preposterous general rule, to which life is one long series of exceptions. Who can take any interest in psychology of this sort ?

By far the ablest thing in the play, to my mind, is Cesare's long soliloquy, during which, as he thinks back over his life with Fiorella, his whole happiness gradually crumbles to pieces. As a rule, I am no enthusiast for soliloquies ; but in a thoroughly conventional play, one convention more or less is no great matter, and here the effect is original and striking. The one tiny, inarticulate doubt aroused by Fiorella's demeanour at sight of Cosmo, falls upon Cesare's peace of mind like a spark upon touch-paper, and runs smouldering around in an ever-widening circle, until nothing is left but dust and ashes. If the

persons concerned were more real to us, this passage would be intensely moving. There is nothing more essentially dramatic than the train of thought, started, very probably, by the most trivial word or incident, which seems suddenly to set the orb of our life revolving on its axis, until, in the space of a few moments, its whole orientation is altered, and what was light is darkness, and what was darkness is fierce, insistent light. There is no reason to despair of the dramatists who conceived this scene. They have the root of the matter in them. The effect is worth transferring to a better play, in which it might be more subtly elaborated. For the rest, there is a good deal of pretty writing scattered here and there throughout. Barring a few flagrant modernisms, the diction, as a whole, shows a good deal of tact and literary feeling. It seldom offends, but it as seldom delights; and if work of this class is to take a high and permanent place in dramatic literature, it is essential that its merits of style should be positive, not merely negative.

“THE ADVENTURE OF LADY URSULA”

ADROITNESS is the master quality of this gay and bustling comedy. Though it is, I believe, Mr. Anthony Hope's first play, neither in construction nor in dialogue is the hand of the beginner for a moment apparent. Mr. Hope is appallingly clever. His faculty for turning out supple and pointed dialogue was already well known; but he now proves to have an equal fertility in the invention of those touches of “business” which are more telling on the stage than the most brilliant wit. In this way, *The Adventure of Lady Ursula* is as remarkable a first attempt as *The Ambassador*. Mr. Hope, no less than Mrs. Craigie, seems to have been born with the instinct of the stage highly developed. He has mastered, without any apparent effort, that knack of theatrical craftsmanship, which many successful playwrights have acquired only through years of laborious apprenticeship. Except for a certain flagging in the movement of the last act, the play might be called technically faultless. True, it is a narrative-in-action rather than a broad-based, largely-proportioned piece of dramatic architecture. We feel that the playwright is, so to speak, inventing as he goes along—that the action might at any moment take an altogether different turn without falsifying its antecedents or our expectations. No part of it is necessarily involved in any other part. I am sure

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that, if a sufficient inducement were offered, it would be easy for Mr. Anthony Hope, starting from the present first act, to write a totally different second and third act, or starting from the present second act, to write a totally different third and fourth act. Or, again, if the play as it stands were found too short, he might write in a new act between the existing third and fourth, without altering more than a few words in either of them. *The Adventure* of the title ought to be in the plural, for the play is really a series of adventures

Which might, odds bobs, sir ! in judicious hands
Extend from here to Mesopotamy.

The adventures grow out of each other, no doubt, plausibly enough, but by no preordained necessity, and with no far-reaching interdependence. All this, however, is classification rather than criticism. There is no reason in the world why all plays should be constructed on one particular model—nay, there is every reason why they should not. When I was a child, we used to make what we called a “running fire” by setting a number of wooden blocks on end at equal intervals, and then tilting over the first so that it fell against the second, which in turn fell against the third, and so on till the whole row, with a rapid clack-clack-clack, lay flat upon the table. *The Adventure of Lady Ursula* is designed on this system, and the “running fire” flashes along the line with a very agreeable crackle. We may, if we are so minded, prefer the mosaic play or the architectural play ; but that is no reason for attempting to exclude the “running fire” play from the pale of art. If our critical formula has no room for so clever and entertaining a production, we must not reject the play, but enlarge our formula.

At the same time I am not sure whether Mr. Hope’s extraordinary dexterity is to be regarded as a promising sign for his future as a dramatist. It would be better, perhaps, if he had more to say, even if he had a little less

facility in saying it. *The Adventure of Lady Ursula* (a cumbrous title) is all manner, with no matter. A play more devoid of idea, and even of character, it would be hard to conceive. It is plot, all plot, and nothing but plot. It affords a perfect instance of the type of play whose be-all and end-all is curiosity and suspense. We want to know what is coming; like children listening to a nursery-tale, we say, "Go on, go on!"—but when once our curiosity is satisfied, there is nothing left to appeal to any other form of interest. Our emotions are never for a moment touched, and we can find no intellectual pleasure in the study of characters which are not characters at all, but mere cog-wheels and cranks in the mechanism of plot. There is an artistic intention, or rather the recognition of an artistic necessity, in the careful way in which Mr. Hope sheers off from emotion wherever it seems, for a moment, to loom ahead. A modern audience cannot possibly take very much to heart the adventures of a woman in male attire. Such a theme belongs indefeasibly to the domain of fantastic comedy, and Mr. Hope does right in confining himself strictly to that domain. But this he can only do by making his characters behave with impossible levity in the most tragic situations. In the first act, for instance, Ursula thinks that her brother is certain to be killed in a duel arising out of a thoughtless freak of her own. For about three minutes she is very much distressed; but the moment she has conceived the scheme of dressing in her younger brother's clothes and trying (figuratively) to disarm the redoubtable swordsman who threatens her elder brother's life, her entire gaiety returns, and she laughs and jests over the coat and breeches as though she were going on the merriest masquerade. Now this implies a deliberate refusal, on the author's part, to realise the situation. She is not going on a masquerade, but on a forlorn hope; and, whatever her courage and resourcefulness, she could not possibly, in real life, take the situation so flippantly. Again, when she is left alone for a moment in the hall of the deadly

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duellist's house, she skips about merrily under her borrowed plumes in gleeful enjoyment of the frolic. She is going to play a daring game with her brother's life for the stake, yet she behaves as if she were gambling for a pair of gloves, and very sure of winning them. There is nothing in Ursula's character (if character it can be called) to account for this callous levity. She knows she is acting in a comedy, and must not carry on as though it were a tragedy—that is the whole secret of her conduct. Again, we hear of Sir George Sylvester as a recluse who, having killed his best friend in a duel about a woman, has forever forsworn duelling and the society of women. We naturally expect to find his character coloured by his tragic misadventure and his vow. But not a bit of it! These antecedents of his are necessary to the plot; they serve, indeed, as its starting-point; but they have produced no discernible effect on his character, which is simply that of the conventional eighteenth-century man of honour and of pleasure. In neither hero nor heroine, in short, can we discover a single quality or peculiarity, virtue or foible, emotion or passion, that is not necessary, or at any rate eminently convenient, for the carrying on of the plot. And the plot has no relevance, no intention, no suggestion, no theme, in short no meaning. Mr. Hope has simply constructed an ingenious theatrical toy; but it is so neatly finished and brilliantly enamelled that I have no doubt the public will flock to play with it for months to come.

Let me add, in all sincerity, that the public might be much worse employed. Far be it from me to depreciate or discourage such talent and craftsmanship as are here displayed. Mr. Hope is an accomplished man of letters, and he does not, like some other men of letters, lay aside his literary conscience before he begins to write for the stage. There is nothing slovenly, nothing vulgar in his work. His diction is altogether admirable, neither affectedly archaic nor discordantly modern. His puppets are the pleasantest sort of mannikins—high-spirited,

generous, well-bred, witty. His second act is a really brilliant piece of comedy; it suggests Wycherley deodorised. His third act almost trenches upon drama, and is vivid, novel, exciting. The first and fourth acts, though far inferior, are by no means tedious. There is everything in the play, except emotion, character, thought, the pulse of life. I trust—I believe—that in *The Adventure of Lady Ursula* Mr. Hope is only making an experiment, to assure himself that his technical tools are in working order, before he seriously tackles a serious theme.

AMERICAN PLAYS

THE American season has set in with exceptional severity. To me, as I have more than once admitted before, the annual invasion from beyond the Atlantic is as welcome as the flowers in spring. The sense of difference in identity ; the sense of possessing as my birthright the key to such a gigantically interesting civilisation as that of the United States ; the sense of solidarity with half the world which comes over me when I realise that these visitors from half the world away are aliens only in form and name—all this, I own, gives my imagination a thrill which may be irrational, but is none the less real and potent on that account. The commonest melodrama or skirt-show acquires a certain dignity and importance from the fact that it is current coin from Lerwick to Los Angeles, from the Straits of Dover to Behring Strait—not to mention a few outlying corners of the earth. Of course this is as true of cis-Atlantic as of trans-Atlantic products ; but the imagination declines to be either bridled or spurred by logic. I know, intellectually, that America exists ; the newspapers tell me so every day ; and I have even (in what now seems like a previous state of existence) sailed in at the Golden Gate and sailed out again from Sandy Hook. But to know intellectually is one thing, to realise by eye and ear is another. *The Heart of Maryland* and *The Belle of New York* may or may not be artistic triumphs, but assuredly they are palpable evidences of the

existence, somewhere or other in space, of an enormous and enormously wealthy community, curiously unlike, and yet more strangely like, our own. These vast and complex machines, suddenly dropped in our midst, bring home to my senses the real existence of the American nation, much as the bombs in Mr. Wells's romance brought home to the terrestrials the real existence of the planet Mars. I declare it is a sensible pleasure to me, when the curtain rises, to hear the American intonation in the opening words, and no less of a pleasure to note, as the performance goes on, that my ear has got accustomed to the peculiarity and is but intermittently conscious of it. Heine said that the Romans conquered the world because they didn't have to learn Latin. I think it is a still greater advantage to have learnt English in the nursery.

Personally, I enjoyed *The Heart of Maryland* at the Adelphi ; but a drama of the American war always enlists my sympathy in advance. The blue uniform and the gray are in my eyes mementos of a truly heroic episode in the history of our race, and I am not apt to look into their seams. At the same time there are civil-war dramas and civil-war dramas ; and it cannot be denied that *The Heart of Maryland* is a commonplace affair beside that masterpiece of its class, *Secret Service*. But for the evidence of dates, which proves the two plays almost exactly contemporaneous, it would be impossible not to take Mr. Belasco's drama for an inferior imitation of Mr. Gillette's. The materials are exactly the same in both cases ; the invention and manipulation are widely and typically different. One difference which faces us from the very outset is this : *Secret Service* is a drama without a villain, or at least with a villain who conscientiously believes that he is doing his duty ; whereas the mainspring of *The Heart of Maryland* is a conventional villain, peculiar only in his unmitigated atrocity. Again, in *Secret Service* the leading situations were almost psychological ; they turned on interesting points of casuistry, questions of right and wrong. In *The Heart of Maryland*,

the situations are either merely pictorial, or arise from surprises and sudden revelations, or depend upon sheer violence and brutality. Yet again, there is none of the literary quality in *The Heart of Maryland* which distinguished its predecessor, and the comic relief is at once poor and scanty. Still, the play is far from being a bad one as such plays go. It is alert, moving, interesting. It stands about halfway between *Secret Service* and the ordinary Adelphi drama. The one absolutely despicable point in it is the great sensation-scene, where the heroine clings on to the clapper of the alarm-bell. A more ludicrously forcible-feeble effect could scarcely be imagined.

Violence seems to be the besetting sin of the American dramatist. In *The Heart of Maryland* an effect was sought in the brutal pitching about of the (supposed) dead body of a man, as though it had been a sack of potatoes ; while in another scene the heroine, threatened with physical violence by the villain in the presence of the pinioned and helpless hero, turns upon her assailant and, after a fierce struggle, stabs him with a bayonet. All this is rather crude ; but it is far outdone by the crudities of *The Conquerors*, an American melodrama acted by the English company of the St. James's Theatre. In *The Heart of Maryland* the intentions of the villain in pursuing the heroine are left undefined ; Mr. Paul Potter, the author of *The Conquerors*, defines and emphasises, even with insistence, the nature of the violence with which his heroine is threatened by his—hero. This scene has called forth a great deal of exaggerated indignation, and the Censor has even been fiercely attacked for not prohibiting it. This is all nonsense. It would have been a piece of capricious tyranny for the Censor to have vetoed it. Why, we had exactly the same scene two years ago in *The Sign of the Cross*, when Bishops blessed it and Archdeacons kissed the hem of Mr. Wilson Barrett's exiguous tunic. For my part, I detested it ; but I did not abuse the Censor for not making a law of my taste. The second act of *The Conquerors*, and

indeed the play as a whole, does not do any living creature one ha'p'orth of harm. It is bad art, granted—it is tedious, unpleasant, deplorable, if you like—but if it were the Censor's business to veto everything that is bad, tedious, unpleasant, and deplorable, half the theatres in London would very soon close their doors. I don't like *The Conquerors* one little bit; I have no tenderness and very scant toleration for it; but I beg to thank Mr. Redford for allowing us to find out for ourselves that Mr. Potter is a playwright of small talent and no taste, instead of conferring on him the unmerited distinction of martyrdom. As for the outraged critics, can they pretend for a moment that *The Conquerors* is one-tenth part as noxious as a piece of humiliating and sickening rubbish like *Never Again*? Yet I don't remember that Mr. Redford was attacked for licensing that. When the critics have got over the first shock to their sensibilities, I fancy they will find that, like Yvonne, they were more frightened than hurt.

The odd thing is that in New York *The Conquerors* seems to have been accepted, even by its opponents, as a work of some intellectual pretensions. What it lacks is precisely intelligence. It is that most desperate of theatrical monstrosities, a badly-made well-made play. The audience was set against it by its sheer clumsiness long before the crucial scene was reached. Yet it draws near every now and then to something really impressive in the way of grandiose, Hugoesque melodrama. There are several scenes which seem to contain the makings of a great effect, if the author's maladdress did not perseveringly step in to spoil them. It is hard to say that anything is impossible to a dramatist of tact and skill, but I think Mr. Potter's central theme comes very near the outer verge of the possible, on the modern stage. Such brutalities cannot, to our sense, be atoned or condoned; and the trick by which Mr. Potter eludes the full horror of the situation has the effect of rendering the subsequent action, not tragic, but grotesquely and abhorrently comic.

Far be it from me to assert that *The Belle of New York*, at the Shaftesbury, is an entirely admirable product of our Anglo-Saxon civilisation. It is the variety-play in its most unblushing guise, utterly formless, and if possible more vulgar than our home-made musical farces. It is one long carnival of the "joy of living" in its coarsest acceptation. It is garish, unlovely, reeking of alcohol, and redolent of patchouli. But it is distinctly good of its kind—its womankind. The much-advertised Belles are quite up to specification. Out of some fifty young women engaged, not one can be called plain, while at least half a dozen are strikingly beautiful. Moreover, there is life and movement in the piece. The author, Mr. Hugh Morton, does not rhyme so cleverly as Mr. Adrian Ross or Mr. Harry Greenbank, but his writing is not despicable; while the composer, Mr. Gustave Kerker, proves himself ingeniously adaptive. The leading belles, Miss Edna May and Miss Phyllis Rankine, are not only beautiful, but accomplished artists in their way, lending a certain charm even to the deplorable stuff they have often to deal with. They need not fear comparison with the most popular ornaments of our musico-farcical stage. The comedians too are really clever. For my part, I spent an entertaining evening; and when next I am seized with the *nostalgie de la boue* I would as lief go to *The Belle of New York* as to any of its English congeners. Mud it may be, but the mud is iridescent.

“EVELYN INNES”

ONE cannot but fear that in *Evelyn Innes* Mr. George Moore has yielded to an obsession. He has incautiously strayed into the Wagnerberg, and emerged from it, like the Ritter Tannhäuser of old, not without injury to his tact and his sense of proportion. Music having cast its spell upon him, he determined to write a musical novel; and with that thoroughness which is one of his chief virtues, he mastered his subject so conscientiously that in the end his subject mastered him. Of the accuracy of the musical crudition he displays on every page I can form no estimate. Much of what he says on musical subjects is interesting and suggestive to the layman, and the numerous discussions of Wagner and how to represent him give the book a momentary actuality, and possibly a permanent value. On that point I cannot offer even the most diffident opinion. All I can say is that, if the book does not live by virtue of its musical harmonies, its psychological melody will scarcely save it. The story takes no hold on us, and the character-drawing, with all its more than Wagnerian leisureliness of development, produces, in the end, no vivid and compulsive impression of veracity. There are many admirable pages in the book, and innumerable touches of subtle vision and divination. Yet all these patiently-accumulated touches do not make Evelyn Innes a real woman to us, and still less the type-woman whom we must suppose that the author saw in her. It is not

that we disbelieve in her, or find her untrue to nature ; only she never seems to act with that inevitableness which we feel in the sayings and doings of a thoroughly realised and vividly projected character. We seem always to be conscious of the author pulling her this way or that. The radical fault, I imagine, is that he has failed to bring her character as an artist into clear and convincing relation with her character as a woman ; and that failure is in great part due to his absorption in musical technicalities. She is on the one hand a somewhat shallow, sensual-superstitious woman ; on the other hand, an ideal exemplar of a particular theory of operatic art ; and we feel that the two sides of her nature are brought into mechanical juxtaposition, not organic unity.

It is not a pretty story, that of Miss Evelyn Innes, and Mr. Moore certainly takes no trouble to make it seem so. The daughter of an enthusiast for old musical instruments and early religious music, she leaves her home, at the age of twenty or thereabouts, to become the mistress of a man of forty, Sir Owen Asher, an amateur of the severest taste, who has promised to have her trained for the operatic stage. The preliminary phases of this intrigue occupy something like 120 leisurely pages ; yet for all Mr. Moore's patient analysis, we feel that the account of Evelyn's motives, emotions, and instincts is inadequate. Not that Mr. Moore is restrained by motives of delicacy from making his analysis exhaustive. On the contrary, he introduces unpleasing incidents which are not essential to the theme, and merely tend to vulgarise it. The buying of Evelyn's "trousseau," for example, is an almost incredible and quite needlessly disagreeable episode. It is not conventionality, then, that stands in Mr. Moore's way. He might have probed much deeper and yet done it more delicately. What he lacks is sustained and continuous realisation of the soul-states he is portraying. He has flashes of searching insight, but they pass, and we are in the mist again. Here is one of these flashes :—

"In spite of every reason, Evelyn was still undecided whether she should go to meet Sir Owen. It was quite clear that it was wrong for her to go, and it seemed all settled in her mind ; but at the bottom of her heart something over which she had no kind of control told her that in the end nothing could prevent her from going to meet him. She stopped, amazed and terrified, *asking herself why she was going to do a thing that she seemed no longer even to desire.*"

This is true and subtle, and it does not stand alone. But all these individual traits of knowledge and realisation do not cohere and body forth for us a tangible, authentic personality. Evelyn seems to be in Mr. Moore's eyes a theme or a theorem rather than a woman. The truth, probably, is that if he had been content to study her as a woman, she would have taken life under his hands, but that he was bewildered and overburdened by having to graft on the woman he knew, or might have known, the genius and the Wagnerian heroine who was, so to speak, a deduction from first principles. We shall see presently what æsthetic doctrine she was to illustrate.

Well, it is discovered that Evelyn actually possesses the marvellous voice upon which Sir Owen has speculated ; and no sooner has this been ascertained than a break of six years occurs in the narrative. The period of her training and her early triumphs is left a blank, except for certain retrospective allusions after the story is resumed. Evelyn and Sir Owen have remained faithful to each other ; but she, bred a Catholic, is full of scruples as to the sinfulness of the life she is leading. Once, during the suppressed six years, she has actually broken with Sir Owen, but only to take him back again after a few weeks. They have now come to London, where Evelyn has made her first appearance as Margaret in *Faust*, and has repeated her Continental success. She is an exceedingly superior artist, and will play in scarcely anything but

Wagner. Margaret, Leonora (in *Fidelio*), and Norma are, I fancy, her only non-Wagnerian parts. All the great Wagner characters she has played, except Kundry ; and we are given to understand that she has *sung* them—“ hitherto,” according to Owen, “ they had been merely howled.” Owen, be it noted, though rather a poor creature personally, is a great authority on music. In acting, Evelyn is a realist, or rather a naturalist. She can do nothing that is not part of her own experience. Elizabeth in *Tannhäuser* (she impersonates out of the depths of her Catholic womanhood. In the great scene between Wotan and Brünnhilde, Wotan is, in her thoughts, her indignant father, and Wagner has merely anticipated the scene of her half-penitent, half-defiant home-coming. We are not surprised to learn that Madame Wagner thought her Brünnhilde not enough of a goddess :—

“ She had learnt the art of being herself on the stage. That was all she had learnt, and she very much doubted if there was anything else to learn. If Nature gives one a personality worth exhibiting, the art of acting is to get as much of one’s personality into the part as possible. . . . Her acting only seemed extraordinary when she read about it. It was all so natural to her. She simply went on the stage, and once she was on the stage she could not do otherwise. She could not tell why she did things. Her acting was so much a part of herself that she could not think of it as an art at all ; it was merely a medium through which she was able to re-live past phases of her life in a more intense and concentrated form. The dropping of the book [on her first meeting with Faust] was quite true ; she had dropped a piece of music when she first saw Owen, and the omission of the scream was natural to her.”

Again, when she is studying Isolde, we are told that—

“ She read Isolde into the morning paper, receiving

hints from the cases that came up before the magistrates. She found Isolde in every book, all that happened seemed extraordinarily fortuitous, the light of her idea revealing significance in the most ordinary things. Her life was ransacked like an old workbox, all kinds of stages of mentality, opinions, beliefs, prejudices, trite and conventional enough, came up and were thrown aside. But now and then the memory of an emotion, of a feeling, would prove to be just what she wanted to add a moment's life to her Isolde. . . .

"Evelyn had seen Rosa Sucher play the part, and had admired her rendering as far as we can admire that which is not only antagonistic, but even discordant to our own natures. She admitted it to be very sweeping, triumphant, and loud, a fine braying of trumpets from the rise to the fall of the curtain. Rosa Sucher had no doubt attained an extraordinary oneness of idea, but at what price? Her Isolde was a hurricane, a sort of avalanche; and the woman was lost in the storm. . . . There was an extraordinary and incomprehensible neglect of that personal accent without which there is no life. And the difference between the Isolde who has not drunk and the Isolde who has drunk the love potion, which she, Evelyn, was so intent upon indicating, had never occurred to Rosa Sucher, or if it had, it had been swept aside as a negligible detail."

It is presumably in a sort of instinctive loyalty to her naturalistic theory of art that, just at the time when she is studying Isolde, Evelyn finds Owen's love pall upon her. He is an agnostic, a materialist; there is no spirituality about him; and, worse than all, he composes footling songs, and wants her to sing them. As luck will have it, she just at this juncture comes across a musician and musical critic named Ulick Dean, who is all spirituality. He believes in all gods whatsoever, but especially in the Keltic Olympus. He is a star-reader, a crystal-gazer, a believer in, if not a practitioner of, white magic and black

—a theosophist, a Kabbalist. He lives entirely in the unseen universe, and though he is sceptical of the immortality of the soul, he has a rooted faith in metempsychosis. The figure has an air of personal portraiture, and is, in a shadowy way, effective. This energumen Evelyn requires to complete her conception of Isolde. She asks him to help her in studying certain passages, and very soon the teacher becomes the lover. Her position is now very squalid, for she dares not confess to her first lover her intrigue with the second, and she feels herself on the high road to becoming a mere courtesan. Panic-stricken, she passes through a long mental struggle, which the author only too justly epitomises in the phrase “She hated wobbling, yet she did nothing else.” Finally, she flies to the Roman Catholic Church for succour. She has been much struck by the preaching of a certain Monsignor Mostyn, who has said, “As a shell, man is murmurous with morality.” To him she confesses (the scene is an excellent one), and before obtaining absolution has to promise to dismiss both lovers and leave the stage. Then, in order to be safe from Owen, who has announced his intention of waylaying her in the street in order to force an explanation with her, she goes into a convent at Wimbledon for a ten-days’ retreat. When the ten days are over she comes out of the convent, drives back to London—and there the book ends, or rather leaves off. From this abrupt conclusion, as well as from the announcement of another book, *Sister Teresa*, as “in preparation,” one gathers that Evelyn’s “wobblings” are to be continued in our next. I trust she will get her spiritual struggles over with reasonable promptitude. It is very possible that the character of Evelyn Innes may come home more convincingly to other readers than it does to me ; but few readers can help feeling, I believe, that this book, whatever its merits, is somewhat too long drawn.

Mr. Moore’s English improves with every book he writes. *Evelyn Innes* contains very few of the slovenlinesses

of his earlier works. There is a curious use of the word "fortuitous" in one of the above extracts, and the following expression is more quaint than commendable:—"He was prepense to argue about the difficulties of her life." I have noticed only one split infinitive in the book ("to again exclusively occupy her"), and such phrases as this one infrequent: "Like every other Margaret, her prayer-book was in her hand when she first met Faust." Against one misquotation I must vehemently protest: the old English song is not "Summer is a-coming in," but "Summer is icumen (or ycomen, German *gekommen*) in"; and Ulick Dean's "contempt of the Austins and the Eliots" need not have manifested itself in the mis-spelling of Jane Austen's name.

“THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH”

LONG heard of, translated at last, Gabriele d'Annunzio is sure to be one of the obligatory topics of literary small-talk for several weeks to come. *The Triumph of Death* is distinctly a book to be read ; but I do not think it will set the Thames on fire, or in any way “fright the isle from its propriety.” It brings nothing new to the art of fiction, except some interesting refinements of analysis, and a retrospective method of narration which will repay careful avoidance. If Gabriele d'Annunzio had come before Dostoieffsky and Zola, he would have been a pioneer ; coming after them, and other Frenchmen and Russians, he finds his paths ready pioneered for him. The mastery of language, which is understood to be what his countrymen mainly admire in him, of course disappears to a great extent in translation. If he is to conquer English readers, it must be by his matter and his method, not his style. A hard condition, doubtless, but one from which there is no escape for the novelist who seeks to pass the frontiers of his language.

The Triumph of Death might almost be called, like *Maud*, a monodrama. It is from first to last an analysis of the soul-states of one person, Giorgio Aurispa by name. He is never for an instant off the stage, and the function of the other characters is merely to give him his cues, sometimes for speeches, more often for inward cogitations and reminiscences. For he is a terribly introspective

person, is Giorgio, and as he has nothing in the world to do but to "loaf and invite his soul," he naturally gets exceedingly tired of himself. He remains throughout in one unvarying attitude of contempt for himself and every one else. In the last analysis, whatever disguises they may assume, his soul-states are only two—desire and satiety—and his history consists in the steady encroachment of satiety upon desire, until the suicidal mania which has haunted him from the outset becomes homicidal to boot. He presents an appalling and highly moral example of the havoc wrought by idleness and sensuality upon an initially morbid nature. Appalling, and (in its way) edifying the spectacle certainly is; but it falls short of tragic impressiveness because we do not feel it to be inevitable. No doubt such cases do occur, and whatever occurs, no doubt, is in the logical sense inevitable; but where the mischief really lies in outward circumstances, which a trifling accident might radically remodel, the inevitability of the event, though logically demonstrable, cannot be artistically realised. Giorgio's nature, as we have said, is morbid, but not sufficiently so to render him unfit for the battle of life, if only he had something to distract his mind from the contemplation of his precious self. It was not because his uncle Demetrio committed suicide that Giorgio must needs go and do likewise, but because Demetrio was so ill-inspired as to leave his nephew his money. That is the fatal legacy, not any hereditary taint or unfortunate example. But the author will not have it so :—

"The thousand fatal hereditary evils which he bore in his flesh—the indelible imprint of the generations that had gone before him—effectually prevented him from attaining to those heights towards which his intellect yearned, and barred for him the path of deliverance. His nerves, his blood, every fibre of his substance, held him in servitude to their obscure and intricate necessities."

But if he had only been under the necessity of doing something, these other necessities would have been much less imperious. If fate had only taken hold of him and shaken him out of his moping indolence, he might have been a useful and fairly contented member of society. Any task, any pursuit that should occasionally dissipate the mephitic vapours arising from his own swampy soul would have been his salvation; and a tragedy which depends on chance economic conditions may be pitiful, but is scarcely profound.

The author's method of narration produces a crushing effect of monotony. It is evidently intentional; d'Annunzio deliberately rejects the aid of contrast and variety, and prefers to plunge us throughout in suicidal gloom. To this end he employs the device of telling all the happier parts of his story—the beginnings of Giorgio's passion for Ippolita, for example—in the shape of reminiscences arising in moments of black dejection. He leads off with a suicide on the Pincio, one dismal afternoon in March; and having thus struck the keynote, he plunges straight into one of Giorgio's morose monologues, partly addressed to the hapless Ippolita, partly to his own loafing soul. And oh! he is such a pedant, our ineffable Giorgio:—

“Stung by her silence he resumed his argument, spurred on to it not only by the vicious desire to hurt his companion, but by a purely impersonal taste for investigation which had been cultivated and rendered more acute by diligent reading. He sought to express his ideas with the certainty and precision which he had learnt from the pages of the analysts; but just as in his self-communings the point of inner consciousness which he wished to demonstrate was exaggerated and distorted by the set formulas into which he moulded his expression, so in his conversations the straining after perspicacity often tended to obscure the sincerity of his sentiments and led

him into error as to the private motives he professed to discover in other people's actions. Encumbered by a mass of psychological observations—partly his own, partly gathered from books—his brain finally confused and confounded everything both in himself and others, and his mind assumed irretrievably artificial attitudes.

“‘Do not suppose,’ he went on, ‘that I am reproaching you. It is not in the least your fault. Each human heart is furnished with only a given amount of sensitive force to expend in erotic emotion. In the course of time this force must inevitably be consumed like anything else.’”

Did I not say he was an agreeable rattle? This deliverance occurs on the fourth page of the book ; and so he keeps on throughout, the situation never essentially changing, but only growing tenser and tenser until it reaches the snapping-point. Every possible circumstance of gloom is accumulated around the luckless couple. When Giorgio goes to his home it is to be confronted with a brute-beast of a father, a hirsute oaf of a brother, an imbecile aunt, and an idiot nephew, and to moon about the room where his uncle committed suicide. When he and Ippolita retire to a cottage by the sea, they are beset by horrors on every hand, and they deliberately seek out a miracle-working shrine, an Italian Lourdes, which is, as Admiral Guinea puts it, “like a lazaret-house in the time of the anger of the Lord.” Ippolita herself has had fits in the past, and we are kept in pleasing expectancy of their recurrence. Yet Ippolita is, to my thinking, the one point of light in the book. We do not really know her ; the whole action, as aforesaid, takes place in Giorgio's brain, and we are not allowed to look into Ippolita's save with his frenzied eyes. In the end she becomes no living woman at all, but a mere symbol of vampire Sex, a nightmare begotten of undigested German pessimism. But long before this we have ceased to take her at Giorgio's estimation. So long as he still retains any gleam of sanity,

we see in her a charming, devoted, and incredibly patient woman, *gravis dum suavis* in very deed ; and, in the end, her unsuspecting fidelity to the madman who is gloating on the idea of her death is really tragic and touching.

There is power in the book undoubtedly—knowledge and insight, somewhat warped by a preconceived book-philosophy. The longer of the passages quoted above shows high psychological competence, and it by no means stands alone. The little effects of landscape are skilfully touched-in and harmonised with the emotion of the moment. The incidental pictures of peasant life are most interesting, and the terrible pandemonium at the shrine of Casalbordino is described with Zolaesque vigour. Let me add that in the portraiture of Giorgio, intolerably over-elaborated though it be, d’Annunzio achieves an effect which is perhaps peculiar to himself, in the clearness with which he exhibits the two strains or planes of consciousness, distinguishing the sentient from the observant ego, and bringing out their antagonisms and other interactions. The book is not one to be disregarded by readers who care to know what is going on in the world of art. But if, as I have seen it stated, d’Annunzio indeed holds that his mission is “the propagation of joy in life,” I can only say that he has an odd way of setting about it.

PRUSSIAN "PATRIOTISM"

HERR SUDERMANN's romance, *Der Katzensteg*, competently translated by Miss Beatrice Marshall under the title of *Regina*, does not rank high as a work of art ; but it is not without interest, as an ethnological document. One cannot but find an uncanny fascination in contemplating the mind which conceived it, and the multitudinous minds—for the book has been very popular in Germany—which have taken pleasure in it. To a certain degree it fulfils the Aristotelian definition of tragedy, for it arouses both pity and terror ; but the pity is for the race which is habituated to such imaginings, and the terror is lest its barbarous tone of thought should ever become dominant in the world. It is true that *Der Katzensteg*, like the same author's drama of *Heimat* (better known as *Magda*), represents with disapproval, in the main, the excesses of militarism. But it is plain in both cases that neither the author nor his audience can really shake off for a moment the dominion of the ideas from which these excesses inevitably result. The consequence is that they regard as motives within the sphere of art, brutalities and stupidities which to us seem inconceivable and nightmare-like. The myths of "Thebes and Pelops' line" are not more remote from us, nor, in their crude elements, more repulsive, than the story of modern life which Herr Sudermann tells in *Regina*, treating it as tragic, indeed, but quite in the natural order of things.

The action passes in the interval between the Peace of Paris in 1814 and the Hundred Days of 1815. Boleslav von Schranden is the only son of a brutal and licentious tyrant of an East-Prussian baron. The father, being partly Polish by birth, sympathised with the French against the Germans, and in 1807 guided a body of French soldiers across a bridge on his estate called the Katzensteg, thus enabling them to take by surprise and massacre a regiment of Pomeranian infantry. For this act he is naturally held in the utmost detestation by the villagers of Schranden and all the surrounding district. He meets with no legal punishment (oddly enough), but his castle is burnt by the peasants, and he lives for seven years "a man forbid," in company with his mistress, Regina, a village girl, who was his instrument in the act of treachery at the Katzensteg. Boleslav has all this time been absent from home, at first studying at Königsberg, then serving his country (under an assumed name) with gallantry and distinction. He has never had anything in common with his father, for whom he has felt nothing but dislike and fear; and no one loathes the old man's treachery more profoundly than he. On the conclusion of peace in 1814 he bends his steps homewards, only to learn, on arriving at the next village to Schranden, that his father has died of an apoplectic shock, and that the villagers refuse him burial. This is the situation at the opening of the story; and the action consists of the bitter struggle between Boleslav and the Schrandeners, who transfer to him their whole hatred for his father. That a pack of degraded peasants should instinctively try to make the son suffer for the father's crime is natural enough, and might afford the motive of an interesting and artistic story. What makes Herr Sudermann's story inartistic and intolerable is the fact that not a single soul (except Regina, who does not count) stands by Boleslav, and protests against the atrocious and savage injustice with which he is treated. Nay, more—Boleslav himself does not protest against it. He struggles

blindly and brutally ; he does his best to bully and crush his persecutors ; but he never makes the slightest attempt to bring them to reason. Note that it is not at all because they fear a continuation of his father's tyranny that the peasants hate him. They have been freed by law from the condition of serfdom ; and although Boleslav remains (so we gather) the lord of the manor and owner of the surrounding district, it never enters their heads to consider whether he will be a good landlord or a bad. Agrarian hatred, and even the resentment for generations of villeinage, play no appreciable part in the matter. It is simply and solely "patriotism" that animates the good folk of Schranden. It is not the successor of the cruel slave-driver that they boycott, but the son of the man who betrayed his country at the Katzensteg. And it is not the villagers alone who are animated by this "patriotism." Their cowardly and cunning malignity (drawn by Herr Sudermann in the blackest colours and without a gleam of relief) is hard enough to believe in. But their ringleader, it may almost be said, is the pastor of the parish, a man of education and of strong character, a dignified and even reverend personage, whom the author depicts, if not with sympathy, at any rate with undisguised admiration. This worthy preacher of the gospel is as relentless as the meanest of the village rabble to the son of the Katzensteg traitor. He is not a shepherd guiding his flock, but a wolf heading a pack of jackals ; and Boleslav (to say nothing of Herr Sudermann himself) is cowed, and, as it were, magnetised by his wolfishness. That is why I regard this second-rate romance as a sociological or ethnological document of no small significance. Underlying it all, and implicit in the whole mental habit of author and readers alike, is an idea, one might almost say an ideal, of "patriotism" as something opposed to humanity, and, where they come in conflict, superior to it. This ideal they doubtless deny with their lips ; but if their souls were not under its spell, they could find no artistic pleasure in inventing and con-

templating such an unbroken record of brutish injustice as that set forth in *Der Katzensteg*. I am convinced that Herr Sudermann's melodramatic imagination does wrong to his countrymen. I do not believe that in any civilised nation (these Schrandeners, remember, are not uneducated savages) there is to be found a community in which no single individual is for one moment accessible to even the feeblest prompting of justice or humanity. The really significant fact is, not that an inferior artist should draw a crudely abominable picture, but that the public whom he addresses should apparently feel itself neither revolted nor insulted by what, if Herr Sudermann's nationality were not beyond dispute, we should be tempted to regard as the malicious misrepresentation of a foreign and hostile satirist.

Consider the situation for a moment. No one could be more absolutely free than Boleslav from any share in the Baron's guilt. He had no sympathy with, no affection for, his father; and that the pastor and the villagers knew well. He was a mere boy when the act of treachery took place; he had been absent from home for months or years, so that he could not even have protested against it; he knew nothing whatever about it until long after it had occurred. He had proved his patriotism by distinguished service in the campaigns of 1813-14, and Schranden villagers had brought home from the war reports of his bravery and devotion. But does this make any difference to the pastor? Not a bit of it. Does Boleslav so much as remind him of these facts? Never, by a single word. The pastor himself is much more guilty than Boleslav, for he confesses that up to the time of the Katzensteg incident, the Baron, "in spite of his cruelty and ungovernable passions, had been his friend." The pastor, then, had, or ought to have had, influence over the Baron, which his son, a child, could not possibly have. But does Boleslav even hint at this point of view? Not for a moment. It seems to be a perfectly understood thing that when "patriotism" comes

in at the door reason flies out of the window. Boleslav has been the pastor's pupil in old days ; he has done him no injury, shown him no disrespect ; yet this is how the good old man addresses him :—"Because of your cap, my son [a military cap], I will reason with you, although the sight of you is hateful to me." And his "reasoning" is neither more nor less than the plain assertion that the son of a traitor, however innocent and meritorious himself, must look for neither justice, humanity, nor ordinary fair-play at the hands of a Prussian patriot. Boleslav manages to get his father buried by calling in the assistance of some young soldiers from a neighbouring village, who have served with him, sworn brotherhood with him, and idolised him. But the moment the body is laid in the vault, even these heroes turn upon him and insult him. "We would rather die of thirst," they say, "than take a drink of water from your hand. . . . When we go home, and people spit in our faces, we must put up with it, for they will have right on their side." The author, of course, does not precisely share this view or expect his readers to share it ; but it is sufficiently comprehensible to him to be used as a motive in art. Is it *lèse-majesté* to say that outside the Fatherland such monstrous crimes of *lèse-humanité* as are accumulated in this book seem no more fit subjects for art than the fantastic horrors of a fever-dream? Boleslav could not have been more fiendishly treated had he been the son of Judas Iscariot, his father's accomplice in infamy, and the sharer of the thirty pieces of silver.

I have said nothing of the sentimental side of the book—the Crusoe-like life of Boleslav on his island, with a female Friday in the person of Regina, his father's ex-concubine and slave. The figure of Regina is drawn with a good deal of power, and there is a certain painful interest in watching the degrees by which Boleslav falls under the sway of her physical beauty and dog-like devotion. By killing Regina just at the psychological moment, the

author shirks the duty of solving the problem he has stated. I do not blame him ; for the problem is an exceedingly unsavoury one, and so remote from all practical probability that one does not feel in the least bound to overcome the repulsion it excites, and think it out.

“FUHRMANN HENSCHEL”

GERHART HAUPTMANN is cultivating with great success the art of quietism in drama. In other words, the aim of his technique appears to be to suppress all those startling conjunctures and violent crises of emotion and action which have hitherto been accounted peculiarly dramatic, and to reproduce the humdrumness (if the term be permissible) which often characterises the surface aspect of real-life dramas. As yet, I neither praise nor blame this technique; I merely record the tendency which was manifest enough in *Der Biberpelz*, and is consistently followed out in *Fuhrmann Henschel*. Like *Die Weber* and *Der Biberpelz*, this is a low-life study. It is written throughout in Silesian dialect. The scene of four out of the five acts is a basement chamber, half kitchen, half bedroom, under a big watering-place hotel; while the remaining act passes in a small beershop. Henschel, who, I take it, is a sort of livery-stable keeper in a small way, has a wife, a child, and a maid-servant, Hanne. The wife, in the first act, is dying. It is strongly suggested later on that the servant has poisoned her, but as yet we know nothing of this. Such an intensification of interest would apparently be inartistic. All we know is that Hanne treats the dying woman rather unkindly, that Frau Henschel suspects her husband of an intrigue with the handmaiden, that he denies the accusation, which is evidently groundless, and that Frau Henschel makes him promise that when she is dead he

will not marry Hanne. She does not die at the end of the act—to make her do so would be unworthy effect-hunting. It may be said, however, in parenthesis, that the scene of the dying wife’s accusation and the husband’s promise is extremely dramatic in the ordinary sense of the word.

In the second act we gather (quite incidentally) that Henschel’s child is dead. Not till long afterwards is it suggested that Hanne hastened its demise. We learn that Hanne has a child which lives with her father in her native village, and, in our innocence, we imagine that some effect is to be got out of the revelation of this fact to Henschel, or its successful concealment from him. But behold! when Henschel comes on the scene, it appears that he already knows of the child’s existence, and takes a philosophic view of the matter. His home is uncomfortable; Hanne threatens to leave him; and by the advice of his good friend the hotel-keeper, he determines to break his promise to his wife, and marry Hanne. At least, we see (and Hanne sees) that he is about to arrive at this determination; it would be against Hauptmann’s principles to let anything so decisive as his actual proposal to Hanne occur upon the stage.

In the third act Hanne has become Frau Henschel, and we see (though this too is indicated in the least emphatic manner possible) that she has also become the mistress of an ex-waiter in the hotel, with whom she has flirted a little in Act II. Henschel, thinking to give her a pleasant surprise, brings home with him her child, the little Bertha, whom she receives with anything but enthusiasm. And this is the whole of the third act. The fourth takes place in the aforesaid beershop. An old carter of Henschel’s and the brother of the late Frau Henschel tell him that Hanne is untrue to him, and broadly hint that she made away with his former wife and his child. Henschel, very much excited, sends for Hanne, and we think, “Ha! here comes the great scene!” But

not a bit of it! Hanne appears for a single instant, and then runs off again, having convinced Henschel by her mere manner that the accusations are true. There is no investigation, no recrimination, no attack and defence—nothing of what the ordinary playwright would regard as the very essence of the situation. We are not even vouchsafed any evidence as to the accusations of murder. We assume that they are to be regarded as true, but (unless the dialect has grossly misled me) there is nothing to prove that they are. In the last act, we are back in the basement-kitchen again. Henschel is trying to carry on his life with Hanne, but his mind is breaking down under the strain of remorse for his broken promise to his wife. He imagines that the dead woman's ghost is on his track, and he retires into an adjoining room and puts an end to himself, by what means we know not.

Apart from its (presumably) exact reproduction of the manners and language of the Silesian populace, the merit of this play lies in the figure of Henschel. He is a strong, humane, even high-minded man, but essentially dense and inarticulate. A good deal of the apparent avoidance of obvious dramatic effect, on which I have commented, is necessitated, no doubt, by the author's conception of his protagonist's character. Still, it is possible to extract strong drama even from inarticulate personages. For instance, we gather in a casual way that Henschel was much attached to his little daughter who died, but nothing that he directly says or does gives us any indication of the fact. Now, it is comparatively easy to make the grief of even the most inarticulate character effective, in the ordinary sense of the word, upon the stage. Again, given the characters of Henschel, Hanne, and the bystanders, exactly as Hauptmann has drawn them, there would have been no great difficulty in making the scene of Hanne's confrontation with her accusers a passage of elaborate and highly-developed drama—a "well-made scene," as the French critics would say. The action might have taken a dozen

different turns, all equally probable and characteristic of the people concerned. That which Hauptmann has chosen is not a bit more probable than the others. Its attraction for him seems to have lain simply in the fact that it was less “theatrical” than almost anything else he could have devised.

Let me repeat that in saying this I pass no judgment on the æsthetic theory involved. It may be that the technique of the future will take as its watchword the avoidance of the “theatrical,” even where the theatrical happens to coincide with the probable and the natural. One thing, at any rate, is evident. Hauptmann’s method throws an almost unprecedented burden upon his actors. This play is a little gallery (not so “little” either) of Teniers-like figures, each of which demands a most accomplished actor for its adequate presentment. In the ordinary play, the situation, if it be strong and telling, will carry the ordinary actor; but Hauptmann provides no such prop or stay for mediocrity. Each actor must bring original observation and power of composition to his task. It will not be Hauptmann’s fault if the German stage does not prove a nursery of incomparable character-actors.

MR. HARDY'S POEMS

READERS who care more for outward form in verse than for the utterance of a human spirit will find little to their taste in Mr. Hardy's *Wessex Poems*. Those, on the other hand, who are interested to see a strong and sombre character expressing itself, in an imperfectly-mastered medium, no doubt, but with marked originality and high literary power, will be fascinated by the contents of this singular book. Towards the completion of Mr. Hardy's mental portraiture it gives invaluable aid; not less in those pieces which are "dramatic and personative" than in those which may be taken as direct utterances of a mood or thought. There is life and feeling on every page of the book; prick it, and it bleeds. It is also true that every page is open to technical criticism, whether of metre or of diction; but we somehow feel such criticism to be, in this case, an uncalled-for pedantry. If Mr. Hardy could be regarded as specifically a poet, and were like to form a school, one might feel bound to protest against his laxities of form. But he is too great a poet in prose to set undue store by these metrical experiments, many of which have lain unpublished for over thirty years. If you cannot get at their spirit through the flaws and nodosities of their outward form, you must go without a very keen and real literary enjoyment. And even in form, though Mr. Hardy seldom attains high polish, he is almost always original. There are staves and stanzas in this book

which may one day put on a glorified life in the hands of a master of metre ; but if so, he ought to give the credit of their invention to Mr. Hardy.

The verses, as a whole, are very aptly symbolised in the drawings which accompany them—"rough sketches," says Mr. Hardy, "which, as may be surmised, are inserted for personal and local reasons rather than for their intrinsic qualities." Some of them, indeed, are note-book jottings rather than works of art, but others show an accuracy of vision and a sincerity of touch that render them, not curious merely, but really beautiful. Mr. Hardy is specially successful in suggesting with his pencil (as with his pen) the contours of a wide English landscape. His view of Weymouth and the Isle of Portland from the Dorchester Road (p. 95) is really masterly ; and no less admirable is the little vignette which precedes "My Cicely," showing the northern escarpment of "triple-ram-parted Maidon," and the surrounding landscape. A third, which is on the same level of ability (even cleverer, perhaps, because more commonplace in subject), is the study of trees and rolling pasture-lands which faces the poem called "Her Immortality." More of a curiosity, but still very interesting, is the drawing of the amphitheatre at Dorchester, which illustrates the poem "Her Death and After." Several of the other landscapes are striking in their way, and the decorative designs (see, for instance, the hour-glass and the butterflies on p. 6, and the dead woman on p. 165) show dexterity of draughtsmanship as well as poetic conception. Still, it is evident throughout that Mr. Hardy has not acquired perfect freedom in the use of his pencil. The attraction of his work is that of extremely able and original effort, not of thorough accomplishment. And this is exactly the case with his verse as well. Its interest, its merit, is psychological rather than technical, though there are a few pieces (as there are a few drawings) whose technical quality also is very noteworthy.

Most of Mr. Hardy's longer poems are narratives of the kind with which he has made us familiar in *Life's Little Ironies* and other collections of short stories. Some of them, indeed, have already appeared in prose; and in the case of such a piece as "Her Death and After," or even "The Alarm," prose is, no doubt, the more fitting medium. On the other hand, the effect of "My Cicely" is greatly enhanced by its quaint, rugged stanza, with the insistent rhymes in "ee." A Devonshire man in London (the date is 17—) hears of the death of a "Cicely," who, as he imagines, used to be his sweetheart:—

The passion the planets had scowled on,
And change had let dwindle,
Her death-rumour smartly relifted
To full apogee.

I mounted a steed in the dawning
With acheful remembrance,
And made for the ancient West Highway
To far Exonbry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see;

And, changing anew my onbearer,
I traversed the downland
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of chieftains
Bulge barren of tree;

And still sadly onward I followed
That Highway the Icen,
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,
Where Legions had wayfared,
And where the slow river upglasses
Its green canopy.

Arriving at Exeter, the lover finds that the Cicely who is dead is not his Cicely, whom a worse fate has befallen:

she is the drunken landlady of a roadside inn, where, in his journey westward, he has seen but not recognised her :—

I backed on the Highway ; but passed not
The hostel. Within there
Too mocking to Love's re-expression
Was Time's repartee !

Uptracking where Legions had wayfared,
By cromlechs unstoried,
And lynchets, and sepultured chieftains,
In self-colloquy,

A feeling stirred in me and strengthened
That *she* was not my Love,
But she of the garth, who lay rapt in
Her long reverie.

And thence till to-day I persuade me
That this was the true one ;
That Death stole intact her young dearness
And innocence.

Frail-witted, illuded they call me ;
I may be. 'Tis better
To dream than to own the debasement
Of sweet Cicely.

Moreover I rate it unseemly
To hold that kind Heaven
Could work such device—to her ruin
And my misery.

Could anything be more characteristic of Mr. Hardy's tone of mind than his selection and treatment of this incident? Subjecting the crude mischances and brutalities of life to the alchymy of an ironic pessimism, he extracts from them a peculiar bitter-sweet melancholy which is among the most penetrant of latter-day literary savours. Here, in eight lines, is another of *Life's Little Ironies* :—

SHE.

AT HIS FUNERAL

They bear him to his resting-place—
 In slow procession sweeping by ;
 I follow at a stranger's space ;
 His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
 Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
 Though sable-sad is their attire ;
 But they stand round with griefless eye
 Whilst my regret consumes like fire !

We find a continuation of the same theme, with the parts reversed as it were, in a very beautiful poem called "Her Immortality." The spirit of a dead woman, whom he has loved in vain, appears to her lover :—

" You draw me, and I come to you,
 My faithful one," she said,
 In voice that had the moving tone
 It bore in maidenhead.

She said : "'Tis seven years since I died :
 Few now remember me ;
 My husband clasps another bride ;
 My children mothers she.

" My brethren, sisters, and my friends
 Care not to meet my sprite :
 Who prized me most I did not know
 Till I passed down from sight."

I said : " My days are lonely here ;
 I need thy smile alway :
 I'll use this night my ball or blade,
 And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
 Which parted to dissuade :
 " That cannot be, O friend," she cried ;
 " Think, I am but a Shade !

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality ;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me."

With all its simplicity, this is true and original work ; and there is a great deal of at least equal merit in the book—for instance, "The Ivy-Wife," "At an Inn," "The Slow Nature," "The Burghers" (a singularly strong and Browningsque piece), "The Casterbridge Captains," and "A Sign-Seeker." If I were bound to select one number and call it the finest thing in the book, my choice would probably fall on "Heiress and Architect," a noble and beautiful poem. The most popular numbers will, no doubt, be the military ballads. Of these, "Leipzig" is strong and fine, but I cannot regard "The Peasant's Confession" as equally successful. In the first place, it is dramatically incredible that the aide-de-camp sent from Napoleon to Grouchy should confide to a casual peasant the nature of the orders he was conveying. Even that other aide-de-camp of Napoleon, who figures in Mr. Shaw's *Man of Destiny*, was scarcely more imbecile than this. In the second place, the diction of the poem is wantonly unreal. There are times when Mr. Hardy seems to lose all sense of local and historical perspective in language, seeing all the words in the dictionary on one plane, so to speak, and regarding them all as equally available and appropriate for any and every literary purpose. This peculiarity (familiar to readers of his novels) appears intermittently throughout his poems, but in none so obtrusively as in "The Peasant's Confession." On the other hand, no praise can be too high for the ballad of "Valenciennes." It is a gem in every respect—in spirit, in diction, in metre—and must be counted a substantial addition to the riches of English poetry. The speaker is a corporal, who has been struck stone-deaf by the explosion of a shell at the Siege of Valenciennes in 1793. I quote the last four verses, not as

an adequate specimen of the whole poem, but to give some idea of its stirring and ingenious measure :—

I never hear the zummer hums
O' bees ; and don' know when the cuckoo comes ;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valencieën.

As for the Duke o' Yark in war,
There be some volk whose judgment o'en is meän ;
But this I say—'a was not far
From great at Valencieën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,
My wownds come back, as though new wownds I had ;
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valencieën.

Well : Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in. . . .
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valencieën !

The longer one dwells upon these poems, the more strongly does one feel that the peculiarities of their diction and expression are immeasurably outweighed by their inherent interest, beauty, and individuality. The eccentricities are trivial (for instance, the fondness for putting a nominative pronoun after its verb, as in "My children mothers she," "Could ever have mingled we"), and on a second or third reading one scarcely notices them. The beauties, on the other hand, in a great majority of the poems, are deep and abiding ; while every here and there Mr. Hardy attains something very like classical simplicity and strength. For instance :—

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin !"

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide ;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.

This would not be out of place in an Elizabethan song-book.

THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE
SOCIETY

“THE COXCOMB”

CAN nothing be done to make the Elizabethan Stage Society a useful, instead of a ridiculous, institution? It was melancholy to sit at the Inner Temple Hall the other evening, and see so much talent and enthusiasm wasted for want of a little common-sense. For there is real talent in the company, if only it were not tutored into imbecility; and the care with which the productions are rehearsed and stage-mismanaged betokens no small measure of enthusiasm. The trouble is that the whole enterprise is dominated from first to last by a perverse unintelligence which stultifies literature and makes havoc of acting. The founder, director, and moving spirit of the Society is Mr. William Poel. The energy and devotion with which this gentleman has thrown himself into his labour of love are beyond all praise. When one thinks of the toil that must be involved in organising and preparing these frequent performances—in negotiating with civic and legal magnates for the use of their Halls, in animating the ambition, soothing the vanities, reconciling the jealousies, overcoming the laziness of a large company of amateur and unpaid actors, in arranging for the dresses and the music, and, finally, in so rehearsing long plays that, despite the performers' inexperience, they go (as a rule) with perfect smoothness—when one thinks of all this, one feels it base ingratitude to say a word in disparagement of the results achieved. Mr. Poel, it is clear, must possess not only a rare enthusiasm, but

tact, temper, and indomitable tenacity of purpose. There is not another man in London who could do what he does—and there is scarcely another man who, from the artistic point of view, could make such a hopeless mess of it. For here lies the misfortune, and a very serious one it is, not only for the Elizabethan Stage Society, but for all lovers and students of the Elizabethan drama: this man of unique energy, tact, perseverance, and all the rest of it, is at the same time the most obstinately wrong-headed manager and stage-manager that ever chose a play or conducted a rehearsal. He seems to study the Elizabethan stage in order to do precisely the reverse of what reasonable conjecture, if not actual stage-direction, assures us that the Elizabethans did. When he wants to illustrate the use of the upper stage, he chooses a play (*Measure for Measure*) in which the upper stage, in all probability, was not used at all. When he has a shipwreck to present (in *The Tempest*) he places it in the clouds, as though Alonzo had embarked in a balloon and run ashore upon a steeple. In order to illustrate the dramatic qualities of *Arden of Feversham*, he begins exactly in the middle of the play, and proceeds to treat it as though the leaves of the text were a pack of cards to be well shuffled and then cut at random. As for the individual absurdities of his stage-management, they defy enumeration and beggar description. The fact that he can induce his actors and actresses to hold their own intelligence so completely in abeyance is, in a sense, the highest possible testimony to his genius as a leader of men.

You might search the whole length, and even the whole breadth, of the Elizabethan drama for a play more flagrantly unsuited for revival than *The Coxcomb*, by Beaumont and Fletcher. The main plot is nauseous in its absurdity. It has to be made entirely incomprehensible, and its culminating incident suppressed, before a modern audience can tolerate it for a moment. Even the underplot, despite some pretty writing, is merely mawkish, and is, moreover,

so full of coarseness that half of the dialogue has to be omitted. The play, in short, is a characteristic specimen of the hack-work of the period. When all the plays of intrinsic strength and charm had been exhausted, it might have been interesting enough to let us see, for once in a way, what the contemporaries of Shakespeare could be got to accept ; though, even then, a more presentable piece of hack-work might easily have been found. As it is, while the treasures of the period (apart from Shakespeare) are practically untouched, the policy which selects *The Coxcomb* for elaborate revival is incomprehensible and surely indefensible. The performance, however, was less irritating than some of the Society's previous efforts, partly because the acting was, on the whole, better, partly because one did not feel that the eccentricities of stage-management were spoiling a fine and interesting work. Indeed, the less we understood of the main plot the better ; so that for once we might almost call Mr. Poel, as a stage-manager, the right man in the right place. When Mercury, for instance, had to speak a long aside, calling Antonio all the names he could lay his tongue to, while Antonio stood within two paces of him, staring hard at him, and evidently listening to every syllable, we rather relished the outrage upon elementary verisimilitude, as harmonising with the absurdity of the whole occasion. But what possible excuse can there be for assigning to a lady the part of the lover in the underplot ? If the E. S. S. were strictly true to its principles, it should exclude ladies altogether from the stage, and have the female parts played by boys. This, however, is a pedantry which no one would seriously advise ; but to go to the opposite extreme, and have a male part (and not that of a mere boy) played by one of the sex which never showed face on the Elizabethan stage, is gratuitously to abandon the Society's whole position.

“THE SPANISH GIPSY”

AMONG the many heroic qualities of the Elizabethan Stage Society, that which I chiefly admire is its magnanimity in continuing to invite me to its performances. For, though I have always been friendly to its aims and efforts, my friendship has been of that candid quality which it needs some greatness of soul to appreciate. I have sometimes been well-nigh driven to the abhorrent conclusion that the Elizabethans did not read my criticisms, so completely did they abstain from either resenting or profiting by them. They held the even tenor of their way with a lofty indifference, a serene obduracy, that was eminently and admirably British. “Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why”—they simply strode onwards from stupidity to stupidity, from countersense to countersense, indomitable and imperturbable. At last, however, through one chink or another, a glimmer of common-sense seems to have lightened the darkness of their counsels. The performance of *The Spanish Gipsy* at St. George’s Hall actually made some approach to realising the purpose of the Society and justifying its existence. The purpose of the Society is to present the less-known plays of the Elizabethan period after the manner, and under the scenic conditions, which obtained at that period, as nearly as we can reconstruct or conjecture them. This simple and laudable aim the Society

has hitherto done its best to obscure, by excessive curtailments and wanton rearrangements of text, by slow and languid recitation, by meaningless eccentricities of stage-management, by using the upper stage where the poet clearly did not intend it to be used, and neglecting to use it where he did—in short, by making every effort (or so it seemed) to show how things were *not* done in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. With *The Spanish Gipsy* they have turned over a new leaf—or rather they began to turn it, and then lost heart and let it slip back again. Up to the close of the fourth act, they played the scenes in the order in which they were written, with considerable, but not stultifying, curtailments, with a spirit and self-abandonment most creditable in amateurs, and at a fairly rapid, though steadily diminishing, pace. So far good; but in the last scene of the fourth act, Mr. Poel seems suddenly to have repented him of his docility, and from that point onwards he made an incomprehensible and purposeless jumble of the concluding scenes. The last act, as it stands in the text, is tolerably clear and perfectly playable. Mr. Poel, by “slightly rearranging it,” made it utterly meaningless and unspeakably tedious. But it would be ungrateful to dwell on this brief relapse. I prefer to emphasise the fact that the first four acts were treated in reasonable consonance with common-sense and with the principles of the Society. The carrying-in of Clara in bed was, I believe, an archæological error. There is no doubt that actors and pieces of furniture could be “discovered” by the withdrawing of “traverses” or cross-curtains, and that this is what was done when the stage-direction says (for example), “Enter Desdemona in her bed.” In this very play the use of traverses is indicated where, at the end of Act III. the stage-direction runs “Exeunt all except Clara, on whom the scene shuts.” I assume that this stage-direction is found in the early copies, since there could be no reason for a modern editor to add it; and if the traverses could be “shut on” Clara, it is

plain that they could, and should, be opened on her as well. This was the only notable eccentricity of stage-management. In the interests of mere humanity, I would suggest to Mr. Poel that he should allow us a few minutes' breathing-space in the course of a five-act play. That the entr'acte was not quite unknown to the Elizabethans is proved by a stage direction in *The Changeling*, another play by Middleton and Rowley, where we read at the beginning of the third act "*In the act-time, De Flores hides a naked rapier behind a door.*" If not after each act, at any rate at some convenient point midway in the play, Mr. Poel might vouchsafe us an "act-time" of five minutes.

As to the play, which Mr. Swinburne calls a "graceful tragicomedy," and Professor A. W. Ward an "excellent example of the romantic comedy of the later Elizabethan type," I can only say that I envy those critics who can find the slightest grace or vitality in that part of the plot from which it takes its title. The only real merit of the play, it seems to me, lies in the portion borrowed from *La Fuerza de la Sangre*, and especially in the picturesque opening scenes. Anything more frigidly conventional than the "gipsy" intrigue, and the antics of Sancho and Soto, it would be hard to conceive. One fine scene, indeed, belongs to this part of the play—the disclosure of Alvarez to Louis in Act v. scene 2. For the rest, the gipsy-story is not only uninteresting but incredibly ill-told, so that I am quite sure those of the St. George's Hall audience who had not read the text beforehand, are to this moment asking themselves in vain what it was all about. The play, in short, has all the inequality of *The Changeling*, though in a somewhat different fashion. The childish part is not quite so childish in *The Spanish Gipsy* as in *The Changeling*, but it bulks much more largely in proportion to the rest; while, on the other hand, the story of Roderigo and Clara is not to be compared for tragic intensity with the story of De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna.

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It is rather odd, by the bye, that Mr. Poel should have chosen to make his excisions mainly in the blank-verse passages of the play, while the comic scenes, which can never have been good and are now as dead as Nebuchadnezzar, were gone through with relentless fidelity.

“THE BROKEN HEART”

I COULD not attend the Elizabethan Stage Society's performance of Ford's *Broken Heart* at St. George's Hall, and am consequently unable to say anything of the acting. The friend who went in my place has brought me a marked copy of the text, from which it appears that Mr. Poel's blue pencil was once more in its finest form, sabring speech on speech and page on page, like Roland's Durandal mowing its way through the hordes of heathenness. It is true that the most wholesale execution was done in the opening acts, which are a trifle languid, and especially in the somewhat superfluous Prophilus and Euphranea scenes. But though the longest continuous cuts were in these "outward flourishes" of the play, there was scarcely a page which did not show serious gashes, while transpositions were frequent and quite unnecessary. The tragedy is one which might have been recited almost from end to end in its order as it stands; and who can doubt that if the E. S. S. were sincere in its professions this is what it would have done? *The Broken Heart* is not, like *The Changeling*, a play of two plots and of very uneven merit. Ford's style is homogeneous throughout and generally excellent. There was not the slightest reason for subjecting him to the high-handed collaboration of Mr. Poel, and making mincemeat of *The Broken Heart*. Many of the finest things in the play fall before Mr. Poel's relentless pencil; for instance, Penthea's lines—

On the stage
Of my mortality my youth hath acted
Some scenes of vanity, drawn out at length
By varied pleasures, sweetened in the mixture,
But tragical in issue.

Again, where Crotolon says to Orgilus—

Friend, I will have it so
Without our ruin by your politic plots,
Or wolf of hatred snarling in your breast,

the last line, one of the finest in the play, and absolutely essential to the characterisation of Orgilus, strikes Mr. Poel as superfluous and must come out. This nobly characteristic speech of Ithocles must also go by the board—

Whom heaven
Is pleased to style victorious, there to such
Applause runs madding, like the drunken priests
In Bacchus' sacrifices, without reason
Voicing the leader-on a demi-god ;
Whereas, indeed, each common soldier's blood
Drops down as current coin in that hard purchase
As his whose much more delicate condition
Hath sucked the milk of ease : judgment commands
But resolution executes.

Let us be thankful to Mr. Poel, however, for leaving one of the gems of the play intact—the words of Prophilus concerning Ithocles—

He, in this firmament of honour, stands
Like a star fixed, not moved with any thunder
Of popular applause, or sudden lightning
Of self-opinion ; he hath served his country
And thinks 'twas but his duty.

These lines are worthy to be engraved on the tomb of a national hero.

“THE SAD SHEPHERD”

It needed only a gleam of sunshine to make the performance of *The Sad Shepherd* in the quadrangle of Fulham Palace a complete success. The sombre red of the old brick walls, the heavy green of the vines and creepers, were a little depressing under the neutral sky. One longed for a single shaft of light to pick things out a little, and run up and down the keyboard of lurking colour; but alas! in “an age of faith grown frore,” as a living poet phrases it, even bishops have not perfect control of the elements. The Clerk of the Weather sulked unpropitiated; the celestial limelight-man slumbered on his perch; and our spirits, “servile to all the skyeey influences” were inclined to droop with Æglamour rather than frolic with Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Still, the performance was interesting, agreeable, and as successful as it lay within the scope of the terrestrial powers, spiritual and secular, to make it. To me, I confess, the most interesting portion of *The Sad Shepherd* is its prologue, with that incomparable touch of Jonsonian arrogance—

He that hath feasted you these forty years,
And fitted fables for your finer ears,
Although at first he scarce could hit the bore;
Yet you, with patience hearkening more and more,
At length have grown up to him, and made known
The working of his pen is now your own;
He prays you would vouchsafe, for your own sake,
To hear him this once more, but sit awake.

The last phrase is of especial importance as proving that even in the days when the critics were perched on stools, not cradled in stalls, they could fly to Nature's anodyne when the author became too tedious for mortal endurance. This simple little trait of humanity does more than pages of historical reconstruction to bring us into sympathetic touch with our ancestors of three centuries ago. The exhortation, sooth to say, was not quite superfluous in the case of *The Sad Shepherd*. It is pretty enough to read, but it does not and cannot gain by dramatic presentation. To a public which (as a whole) did not read, and therefore preferred to take in its poetry, whether essentially dramatic or only formally so, by the ear, the piece, when completed, might have had a real attraction. No doubt, too, the generality of people in Ben Jonson's day were more accessible than we are to the charm of mere “dressing up” and of simple stage trickery and hocus-pocus. The pastoral, at all events, is more of a masque than a drama properly so-called; and its verse is not in itself exquisite enough to repay the most exquisite recitation, even were that available. How little Ben aimed at dramatic effect, in any possible acceptance of the term, is proved by his bringing in the witch Maudlin under the form of Maid Marian, before he has introduced us to her in her own proper form, and without giving us the least hint that the Maid Marian who comports herself so strangely is not Maid Marian at all. There are limits to the validity of the rule that an audience must not be kept in the dark; but here the poet far oversteps every possible limit. The play, then, is not one into which it is possible to get much dramatic effect, and it is therefore an admirable subject for the whimsical masquerading of the Elizabethan Stage Society. The lines were, on the whole, very well spoken, the costumes were excellent, the music (under the direction of Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch) was delightful, and the fantastic stage-management was pardonable and even entertaining.

Mr. Poel has issued, in the form of a modestly-written

pamphlet, a summary of the three seasons' work of the Elizabethan Stage Society. "There have been," he says, "including the initiatory performance of *Measure for Measure* at the Royalty Theatre in 1893, nine plays revived, of which five were Shakespeare's, making, with the repetitions, twenty-seven representations; and the total receipts have amounted to £1500, while the expenditure has exceeded this amount by £1100. But all of this is not actual loss, as we retain property in the shape of costumes valued at half that amount. . . . There was a loss of £300 over the six performances of *Measure for Measure*, so that the actual loss during the remaining twenty-one performances is less than £300." And he winds up by stating that "£300 is needed as a reserve fund against future losses." When we consider that a good part, at any rate, if not the whole of the loss above stated has come out of Mr. Poel's own pocket, and that the whole organisation and training of the Society (a laborious and often a heart-breaking task) has fallen upon his shoulders, we cannot but admire the indomitable enthusiasm which has animated and still animates him. Again and again it has been my fate to condemn, and even to ridicule, the proceedings of the Society. I have often felt, in doing so, that I was making scant allowance for the difficulties with which it had to contend, and reproaching it with defects to which "its poverty and not its will consented"—its poverty, not so much of money, as of other no less essential resources. It was not my business to make allowances, to carry myself conjecturally behind the scenes, and fight Mr. Poel's battles with him in imagination. I had only to deal with what was subjected to my faithful eyes, and with that I dealt, let me hope, faithfully. At the same time, I am glad of this opportunity for admitting that many of the errors on which I have commented have arisen from circumstances over which the Society, and its Director, had no control. For instance, I have more than once insisted that they ought to leave Shakespeare, and especially

his better-known plays, alone, and devote themselves to the lesser Elizabethans. It now appears that in so far as they have departed from this policy, it was because they found the better-known plays the more attractive to their paying supporters. This shows a curious lack of intelligence, of enlightened curiosity, on the part of their public; but for that, of course, it would be absurd to make the Society responsible. Again, I have little doubt that a good deal of the ruthless cutting which in my judgment goes far to nullify the uses of the Society, has been forced upon Mr. Poel by the impossibility of getting his able and willing but imperfectly trained actors to speak long speeches, or conduct protracted scenes, with the necessary spirit and variety. At the same time, in this matter of cutting and rearrangement, Mr. Poel, I think, proceeds upon a mistaken principle. He says: “The Elizabethan dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, were bad constructors of plots. They could conceive fine dramatic situations and write powerful scenes, but there is often no method, no sequence, no directness of purpose in the arrangement of the scenes, so that interest aroused in one scene is often dissipated in the next. . . . But where rearrangement of scenes is necessary, the utmost precaution must be taken. . . . It has always been a rule of the Society to rehearse the whole play as it was originally written, and only when the author’s point of view is realised, to make such omissions and revisions as are absolutely essential. To give more perfect form to a play is to increase its vitality.” Now this, to begin with, begs an important question. It may be my density, but in no single instance have I found Mr. Poel’s rearrangements give “more perfect form to a play” or “increase its vitality.” On the contrary, they have always seemed to me to obscure the action, and often fatally. But, waiving that point, I should like to urge upon Mr. Poel that the effort of the Society ought to be to let us judge for ourselves, by the experiment of faithful representation,

whether the lesser Elizabethans were or were not such bad dramatic story-tellers. Several of them, I think, were not nearly so bad as Mr. Poel makes out ; at any rate, he ought to give them a chance of speaking for themselves. We want to see and assure ourselves what they *were*, not what they might have been had they had Mr. Poel to guide them. If the Society actually begins by rehearsing each play entire, they ought to give two performances of it—one for people who like it as the author wrote it, one for those who prefer it as Mr. Poel thinks he ought to have written it. But does Mr. Poel really mean to tell us that *Arden of Feversham* (for instance) was rehearsed in its integrity before the Society decided that, having “realised the author’s point of view,” they ought to begin in the middle of it ?

“THE MERCHANT OF VENICE”

The Elizabethan Stage Society recited *The Merchant of Venice* at St. George's Hall the other evening. They did not, on the whole, recite it well, but they ploughed steadily through it, Morocco, Arragon, and all, neither cutting (except a few lines for propriety's sake) nor disarranging the order of the scenes; and this is no slight mercy at the hands of Mr. Poel. They got through it all in less than two hours and a half, or something like what we may assume to have been the Elizabethan time of representation. Mr. Poel himself purported to give us the red-haired comic Shylock of Shakespeare's time, the Shylock of sixteenth-century Anti-Semitism; but the cowl does not make the monk, nor the red wig the ferocious usurer; and as Mr. Poel, himself the mildest of gentlemen, was otherwise undisguised, it cannot be said that his performance was either very comic or very blood-curdling. He looked no more like a Jew than I to Hercules, and in his bearing he showed much less kinship with Marlowe's Barabas than with the traditional Moses of *The School for Scandal*. His idea of comedy, moreover, is summed up in a sort of arbitrary eccentricity which is occasionally laughable, but rather from the absence than the presence of humour. For instance, when Launcelot says, "I will not say you shall see a masque," Shylock, according to Mr. Poel, emits a heartrending howl as though he were literally upon the rack; and in his subsequent injunctions to

Jessica he blubbers—that is the only word—at the pitch of his voice. In short, Mr. Poel is not enough of an actor to come anywhere near the grotesquely terrible Shylock whom Burbage no doubt presented. Still, his performance set me wondering whether there may not be a success in store for the first actor of real genius who shall abandon the idealising tendency of recent years and, instead of posing as one of the Major Prophets, shall give us a low-life Shylock, somewhat after the Fagin type. I do not suggest, of course, that this reading of the character should oust the idealised Shylock from the boards, but simply that it might be interesting as a change. Rational stage-management is apparently past praying for at E.S.S. performances; but why does no one instruct the minor actors to moderate the incessant, mechanical laughter which they conceive to be appropriate to comedy? Gratiano could not utter three words without a senseless and mirthless “Ha ha ha,” and Salanio, Salarino, and Nerissa carried the same foolish practice to a maddening excess.

APPENDIX

BOOKS AND PLAYS NOTICED

PLAYS PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT. By
BERNARD SHAW. 2 vols. London : Grant Richards.

CARLYLE ON BURNS. By JOHN MUIR. Glasgow :
William Hodge and Co.

CHARLES DICKENS. A Critical Study. By GEORGE
GISSING. London : Blackie and Son.

THE MODERN FRENCH DRAMA. By AUGUSTIN
FILON. Translated by JANET E. HOGARTH. London : Chapman
and Hall.

RAGGED ROBIN. Adapted by LOUIS PARKER from
Le Chemineau, by JEAN RICHEPIN. Her Majesty's Theatre, June
23, 1898.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC. Play in five acts. By
EDMOND ROSTAND. Lyceum Theatre, July 4, 1898.

LYSIANE. Play in four acts. By ROMAIN COOLUS.
Lyric Theatre, June 20, 1898.

BLANCHETTE. By M. BRIEUX. Translated by J. T.
GREIN and M. L. CHURCHILL. West Theatre, Albert Hall, Decem-
ber 9, 1898.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS. Adapted from DUMAS's famous novel by HENRY HAMILTON. Globe Theatre, October 22, 1898.

THE MUSKETEERS. By SYDNEY GRUNDY. Founded on ALEXANDRE DUMAS's novel. Her Majesty's Theatre, November 3, 1898.

POEMS. By WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY. London: David Nutt.

A SIMPLE GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH NOW IN USE. By JOHN EARLE, M.A. London: Smith, Elder, and Co.

JULIUS CÆSAR. Her Majesty's Theatre, January 22, 1898.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING. St. James's Theatre, February 16, 1898.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A CRITICAL STUDY. By GEORGE BRANDES. 2 vols. London: Heinemann.

MACBETH. Lyceum Theatre, September 17, 1898.

A LIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. By SIDNEY LEE. London: Smith, Elder, and Co.

THE POEMS OF SHAKESPEARE. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by GEORGE WYNDHAM. London: Methuen and Co.

PELLEAS AND MELISANDE. Tragic Romance in five acts. By MAURICE MAETERLINCK. Prince of Wales's Theatre, June 21, 1898.

TRELAWNY OF THE WELLS. Comedietta in four acts. By ARTHUR W. PINERO. Court Theatre, January 20, 1898.

THE MANŒUVRES OF JANE. Comedy in four acts. By HENRY ARTHUR JONES. Haymarket Theatre, October 29, 1898.

LORD AND LADY ALGY. Light Comedy in three acts. By R. C. CARTON. Comedy Theatre, April 21, 1898.

PETER THE GREAT. Play in five acts. By LAURENCE IRVING. Lyceum Theatre, January 1, 1898.

GODEFROI AND YOLANDE. A Mediæval Play in one act. By LAURENCE IRVING. London : John Lane.

THE MEDICINE MAN. Melodramatic Comedy in five acts. By H. D. TRAILL and ROBERT S. HICHENS. Lyceum Theatre, May 4, 1898.

THE AMBASSADOR. Comedy in four acts. By JOHN OLIVER HOBBS. St. James's Theatre, June 2, 1898.

THE TERMAGANT. Play in four acts. By LOUIS N. PARKER and MURRAY CARSON. Her Majesty's Theatre, September 1, 1898.

THE JEST. Play in four acts. By LOUIS N. PARKER and MURRAY CARSON. Criterion Theatre, November 10, 1898.

THE ADVENTURE OF LADY URSULA. Comedy in four acts. By ANTHONY HOPE. Duke of York's Theatre, October 11, 1898.

THE CONQUERORS. Drama in four acts. By PAUL M. POTTER. St. James's Theatre, April 14, 1898.

THE HEART OF MARYLAND. Drama in four acts. By DAVID BELASCO. Adelphi Theatre, April 9, 1898.

THE BELLE OF NEW YORK. By HUGH MORTON. Shaftesbury Theatre, April 12, 1898.

EVELYN INNES. By GEORGE MOORE. London : T. Fisher Unwin.

THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH. Translated from the Italian of GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO by GEORGINA HARDING. London : Heinemann.

REGINA : OR THE SINS OF THE FATHERS. By HERMANN SUDERMANN. Translated by BEATRICE MARSHALL. London : John Lane.

FURHMANN HENSCHER. Schauspiel in fünf Akten.
VON GERHART HAUPTMANN. Berlin : S. Fischer.

WESSEX POEMS AND OTHER VERSES. By
THOMAS HARDY. London : Harpers.

THE COXCOMB. Comedy. By BEAUMONT and
FLETCHER. Inner Temple Hall, February 10, 1898.

THE SPANISH GIPSY. Comedy. By MIDDLETON
and ROWLEY. St. George's Hall, April 5, 1898.

THE BROKEN HEART. Tragedy. By JOHN FORD.
St. George's Hall, June 11, 1898.

THE SAD SHEPHERD. Pastoral Play. By BEN
JONSON. Fulham Palace, July 23, 1898.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE. St. George's Hall,
November 29, 1898.

THE END



